

A  
DISCOURSE  
OF THE  
NATURE  
OF  
God's Decrees :

BEING  
An ANSWER to a LETTER  
from a Person of Quality con-  
cerning them.

By THOMAS HOCKIN, B. D.  
sometime Fellow of *All-Souls Colledge*  
in *Oxford*; and late Preacher at *Great*  
*S. Bartholomews in London.*

Ὁὐκ ἀναγρῶμεν τὴν τῷ θεῷ φιλελευθωρίαν,  
εἰδότες τὸ κήρυγμα τῆς ἀληθείας,  
καὶ τὸν ἔλεον Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τῷ σωτῆρι ἡμῶν.

L O N D O N,  
Printed for *Edward Vize*, at the Sign  
of the *Bishop's Head* over against the  
*Royal Exchange* in *Cornhill.*  
MDC LXXXIV.



DISCOURSE

OF THE

NATURE

OF

GOODS



AN ANSWER  
TO A PAMPHLET  
CONTAINING

BY THOMAS HOOKER, B.D.  
Fellow of All-Souls College  
in Oxford; and late Preacher at Great  
St. Bartholomew in London.

TO WHICH IS ADDED  
A LETTER TO THE READER  
BY THE AUTHOR.

L O N D O N

Printed for Edward Kier, at the Sign  
of the Bishop's Head over against the  
Royal Exchange in Cornhill.

MDCCLXXIV.

TO THE

Right Reverend FATHER IN GOD,

GEORGE

LORD BISHOP

OF

WINCHESTER,

Prelate of the Most Noble  
Order of the GARTER.

My LORD,

**T** HIS small and  
imperfect Essay  
had long before  
this time been laid at your  
feet (humbly begging your

A 3 accep-



## The Epistle

acceptance ) if the severity of the Winter season hindering the Press , and the unkindness and delay of the Printer since , had not unhappily prevented it : tho' you may now very justly admire that among so great a variety of Books penned on this Subject, and the infinite Disputes that have troubled the World about it , I should presume to appear in publick, that I should engage in so difficult a Problem, and should venture to make a discovery of this, as Terra Incognita ; since many

## Dedicatory.

ny Eminent and Learned Men, in their most curious endeavours of finding out the truth of it, ( launching forth into this vast Ocean ) have at length returned back laden with nothing but with greater doubts, and heavier perplexities ; but the great Motive that hath induced me to the Publication of it, is this, That the facile perswasion of irresponsible Decrees, hath infinitely contributed to the desperate presumption of some Men, they as vainly imagining that there is no possibility

A 4 sibi-



## The Epistle

sibility of interrupting their justified estate, that the most flagitious practices of life will never effect it. So that from this weak topick some men have unhappily drawn many dangerous conclusions, that their security is greater, and their happiness indeed firmer, than in truth and reality it is. Hence these Absolute Predestinarians have often begged a Blessing, and said Grace over their horrible Crimes and Enormities; and have made it their business to consecrate the foulest

## Dedictory.

est impieties to the use of  
a pretended good Old Cause.  
Thus these vile Seducers  
by their cunning and insin-  
uating Arts have caused men  
to err, and deviate from  
the truth; and they have  
wholly studied to possess  
their Profelytes with an o-  
pinion, that they shall never  
enter into Heaven, that the  
Gates thereof shall be fast  
lockt and bolted against them,  
if they bring not this Tick-  
et of their absolute Election,  
signed and sealed by the hands  
of the Presbytery, (the  
Representatives of the Sy-  
nod



## The Epistle

nod of Dort ) for their ready admission into it : So that these Religious Enchanters have too often allured, and so captivated too many to embrace this desperate Principle, and hereby they have easily obtained the greatest Victory, and Conquest over the weakest judgements in a Nation; and in this manner they have encouraged men to horrid Rebellion. When these Predestinarian pests did breath forth such infectious Doctrines, spreading the Poyson of these destructive Principles into  
their

## Dedictory.

their Followers breasts, who have thereby imagined themselves as secure of Heaven and happiness, as if they were at that very instant in the present possession thereof. But 'tis strange, that men should lay on the foundation of the Gospel of Peace, such Wood, Hay and Straw, meer Stubble; such pitiful infirm Doctrines, which will not abide the Test of sound, and sober Reason, all of which are so highly injurious to God, and as fatally dangerous to men; infinitely prejudicing their minds  
and



## The Epistle

and hearts ; so that they  
will not entertain far better  
Sentiments and Notions.  
And the Tenet of unconditi-  
onal Decrees was once from  
the Mouth of pretended  
Sanctity and Demureness  
proclaimed to the Nation, as  
the great Arcanum of Chri-  
stianity ; when indeed it  
was nothing else but a more  
secret Mystery of iniquity.  
When men were so easily  
lulled asleep in the lap of  
carnal security, and too great  
confidence of their good  
state, upon a weak and  
groundless fancy of their pe-  
rem-

## Dedictory.

remptory Election to Salvation, and that from all Eternity. Now Your Lordship very well knows that this Position is infinitely destructive of a good life; and it only serves to free men from the labours of a holy and regular course; and it hath been rendered unhappily instrumental to encourage the greatest sins and sinners: And a good Father of the Church does closely interrogate, How any one can affirm and say that he is a true Christian, and one of Gods Sheep, and belongs to his



## The Epistle

his Fold when he cannot,  
neither labours to produce  
the proper marks, and sig-  
natures of Christianity, which  
will alwayes be made known,  
and perspicuous in the in-  
tegrity of our lives, and acti-  
ons.

Now the maintaining of  
unconditional Election does  
no way advance true Pie-  
ty, but rather a confede-  
racy in sin, and an associa-  
tion in iniquity, and a jun-  
cto in Rebellion. And all  
this hath, and is secured un-  
der the conduct of a Sect,  
or

## Dedictory.

or private Party; which hath been too notorious among us. Though ( my Lord ) what I have done in my ensuing Treatise, hath been with a purpose far different from what was truly visible in the face of other mens designs; it is, that Gods great mercy towards the race of Mankind, may be truly advanced, and glorified in this so weighty an Article in our Religion; and that men may be rightly instructed, and duly improved, and that in order to a pious and Religious course of life, discover-

ver-



## The Epistle

vering the blessed effects thereof in a ready obedience to Gods Laws, and his Vicegerents. For 'tis too evident, that the opinion of absolute Divine Constitutions, hath made way for an inundation of the greatest Vices, it both does occasion the dissolution of all good Government; such Predestinarians supposing that all events in Kingdoms and States, are the necessary issues of Gods Decrees; and that they are, and must be the most proper adapted instruments of executing of them.

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upon

## Dedictory.

upon this account Your  
Lordship hath seen Rebelli-  
on march under the disguise  
of Reformation, and though  
the wind of Religion dis-  
played some mens Banners;  
yet profit and interest direc-  
ted their march. But though  
the North may be still preg-  
nant with these kind of  
Storms; yet I hope men  
will have their eyes in their  
heads to foresee them; and  
when fire breaks out in a  
Neighbour Nation, they will  
exercise the greatest care  
for the preservation, and  
safety of their own. And  
a God



## The Epistle

God be thanked, we have a Neptune so powerful, that can compose the rash, and calm the violence of those turbulent and impetuous Northern Seas, and Tempests. Thus what I have done (my Lord) in my following Tract, hath been to rectifie this Notion, that hath had so fatal and malignant an influence on mens practices in the Nation. And I humbly beg and implore Your Lordships pardon, that I should be so ambitious to have this small piece come forth into the World, under the  
shel-

## Dedictory.

Shelter of Your great Name  
and Patronage ; though the  
design of it deserves the Pro-  
tection of one like Your self ;  
whose great Loyalty, and Pi-  
ety is so exemplary among  
us ; and whose life is a perfect  
contradiction to this Geneva  
Principle. So that Your  
constant Fidelity and Allegi-  
ance to our dread Sovereign  
in the greatest vicissitudes,  
and varieties of Accidents ;  
and Your wonderful Zeal in  
promoting true Religion and  
Piety appears to the World, to  
be the clearest confirmation of  
Your dislike of this Assertion of  
a 2 Gods



# The Epistle, &c.

*Gods Absolute Election of  
Men. All which gives me  
encouragement to acknowledge  
my self in the most humble du-  
ty, and the most submissive  
Stile, to be*

*My LORD,*

*Your Honours most*

*obliged and most*

*obedient Servant,*

*T. H.*

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*Books*

Books Printed for, and are to be sold by  
Edward Vize, at the Bishop's  
Head over against the Royal  
Exchange in Cornhill.

**A** Discourse of Prayer: Wherein  
this great Duty is stated, so as  
to oppose some Principles and Practi-  
ces of *Papists* and *Fanatics*; as they are  
contrary to the Publick Forms of the  
Church of *England*, established by her  
Ecclesiastical Canons, and confirmed  
by Acts of Parliament.

A Discourse concerning the Tryal of  
Spirits: Wherein Inquiry is made in-  
to Mens Pretences to Inspiration for  
publishing Doctrines in the Name of  
God, beyond the Rules of the Sacred  
Scriptures. In opposition to some  
Principles and Practices of *Papists* and  
*Fanatics*; as they contradict the Do-  
ctrines of the Church of *England*, de-  
fined in her Articles of Religion, esta-  
blished by her Ecclesiastical Canons,  
and confirmed by Acts of Parliament.

A *Spittle* Sermon Preach'd In Saint  
*Brides* Parish Church, on *Wednesday* in  
*Easter Week*, being the Second Day of  
*April*,



*April, 1684.* Before the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor, the Court of Aldermen, and the Sheriffs of the now Protestant, and Loyal, City of *London*. These three, by *Thomas Pittis*, D. D. Chaplain in Ordinary to his Majesty.

Advice to the Readers of the Common Prayer, and to the People attending the same : With a *Preface* concerning *Divine Worship*. Humbly offered to Consideration, for promoting the greater Decency and Solemnity in performing the Offices of Gods *Publick Worship*, administred according to the Order established by Law amongst us. By a well meaning (though unlearned) *Laick* of the Church of *England*, T. S.

The Life of the Learned and Reverend Dr. *Peter Heylin*, Chaplain to *Charles I.* and *Charles II.* Monarchs of *Great Britain*. Written by *George Vernon*, Rector of *Bourton on the Water* in *Gloucestershire*.

The Crafty Lady : Or the Rival of Himself : A Gallant Intrigue. Translated out of *French* into *English*, by *F. C. Ph. Gent.*

The

The *Visions* of Government, Where-  
in the *Antimonarchical* Principles and  
Practices of all *Fanatical Common-*  
*wealths-men*, and *Jesuitical Politicians*  
are discovered, confuted, and expo-  
sed; By *Edward Pettit*, M. A. and  
Author of the *Visions* of Purgatory and  
*Thorough Reformatiions*.

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*I hope*

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THE



*I hope the candid Reader will pardon the Errata's that do occur. Among several of them, there are these,*

**P**age 11. line 21. for *respective*, read *irrespective*. p. 85. l. 15. for *coercion*, r. *coaction*. p. 124. l. 13. after *no*, add *though all sinners*. p. 153. l. 10. r. *confirmation*. p. 250. l. 11. r. *in the day of thy power*. p. 275. l. 4. dele the *comma* before *Vulcan*. p. 327. l. 8. r. *Religion's*. p. 343. l. 9. r. *since in the Divine Election there,*

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THE

DISCOURSE  
OF THE  
NATURE  
OF  
God's Decrees.

**W**HEN I had the happiness  
to enjoy the sweetness of  
converse with you last,  
you were then pleas'd to  
intimate to me, your de-  
fire (which is now seconded with  
your most importunate Letter) that I  
would give you my opinion and weak  
judgement



## *A Discourse of the*

judgement of that excellent Book entitled [ *Deus Justificatus* ], or the Divine Goodness vindicated and cleared against the Assertors of absolute, and inconditionate Reprobation: I do heartily wish, that I had read your ingenious Author with greater diligence, and with a stricter advertency; but however I shall not tread in the footsteps of another mans industry, but endeavour to trace the truth of the Question concerning Gods Decrees (which is of so great weight and importance to every Christian) so far forth as Divine Revelation (that is, the Sacred Scripture) gives direction and guidance: for here our Reason must not be too confident, neither so presumptuous an intruder, as to offer a forg'd title to a full understanding of this great Doctrine of Predestination, or of any other Divine Myserie; it cannot challenge it by the Prerogative of its nature: for the Myserie of the Scripture disdain the Power of our Reason: they do not become tributary to its power, neither are they comprehended under its Jurisdiction and Dominion. We should not therefore do our selves, or our reason, so great

great an injury, as not to acknowledge the Almighty the Author of the abstruser points of Divinity, as well indeed as the sole Disposer of the knowledge of them: the best discovery of which, is most clearly deriv'd from the Light of Gods revealed Will, in the brighter Oracles of his Word; so that I shall entirely adhere to the advice of an eminent Father in the Greek Church; *Ἄν τις θέλει ὁμολογεῖν τὰς ἀγίας μυστηρίων μυστήρια τὸ πνεῦμα ἀγίου ὁμολογεῖται ταῖς ἀποδόξαις γενέσθαι*, (that is) *As concerning the holy and divine mysteries of Faith, and Christian Religion, we ought to do nothing by accident, as to introduce the products of our brain, the meer issues of our own invention, without the divine warranty and authority of the Sacred Scriptures.* And here I shall not dwell on the preliminary proof of the Hypothesis, namely, that there are Divine Decrees, and fixed Constitutions of the Almighty (these immanent acts residing in the Divine Intellect) since the voice of the Scripture does so often, and so loudly proclaim the undoubted certainty of them, as when the sacred Decrees are denominated, and come under the plain Appellati-



ons of the Purposes of God, of the Election of God, of the *ᾠρισμένῃ βουλῇ τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ προγνώσει, the determinate counsel, or fore-knowledge of the Lord, as in Acts 2. 23.* Now such persons as insist on the Negative, they do in the very same breath seem to deny, even God himself, when they refuse to ascribe that to him, which by an easie concession they will allow to a rational creature; when even a prudent person, (who is presum'd as such) does alwayes gradually proceed in the firm steps of wisdom and consultation; so that he acts nothing that he fully designs, till he hath summon'd in, and so settled his wandring and volatile thoughts, and weigh'd all the circumstances of action in the scales, in the due deliberation of them: And now upon the result of this so regular a debate of the soul, a wise man concludes with a firm resolve, of disposing of all things to a perfect, just and noble end: and then surely by a far greater parity of reason, to the most wise God, (the great Architect of the World) there must be attributed a greater Prerogative, whose ineffable Wisdom is infinitely supereminent to that of infirm Mortals;

## Nature of Gods Decrees.

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Mortals ; who in his Divine Prescience, does clearly foresee, how things in his just Oeconomy will be effected, and certainly come to pass : So that poor man falling from his original rectitude, and primitive integrity, and not moving in that sphere of duty, wherein the great God had placed him, he did quickly lose that full aspect and correspondence, (namely, that blessed communion he had with his Creator). Hence he was condemned to an eternal night of horror, and so to circulate in perpetual misery ; till the Almighty, from the tenderness of his pity and commiseration, did break forth with so quick a light and mercy, in that so signal an irradiation of his goodness, in that first Evangelical Promise, that *the seed of the Woman shall break the Serpents head.* Thus this first dawning of divine grace and mercy, did clearly shine forth in the Incarnation of our blessed Saviour ; and so you plainly read *Ephes. 1. 5.* of Gods having *predestinated us to the adoption of Children by Jesus Christ, to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will :* So that the Divine Decrees, as they are truly considered in themselves, and in

1813 B 3 their



their proper intrinſick nature, and not in their real effects, in the juſt execution of them, they are all acts of Gods free grace and goodneſs; and they do truly advance, and highly illuſtrate the glory of it. For it is Gods absolute will, that he will deal in this manner with men, that he will go on in this way of proceſs, by the readieſt rules of Juſtice and Mercy, in the due rewarding our faith, and real obedience; and ſo on the contrary, in the inflicting condign puniſhment, on all that obſtinately reſuſe the gracious tenders of mercy through the bleſſed Jeſus; and ſo become truly deaf and obdurate to all its ſweeteſt charms and invitations. Thus you ſee, that the wrath of God is not entail'd on *Adam's* poſterity, as they are men; but it really deſcends on them, as perſevering vicious and ſinful; as you may read it expreſſly in *Eph. 5. 6.* *Dei ira*, by reaſon of that black catalogue of grievous enormities and crimes mentioned in the precedent Verſe, *cometh the wrath of God,* and that *on the children of diſobedience*; and not becauſe of any eternal Law, or any immutable Decree and Conſtitution eſtabliſhed in Heaven; For you know,  
that

## *Nature of Gods Decrees.*

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that there is no Court of Judicature in any Nation makes Penal Laws and Decrees against mens meer persons and natures, but only against their viler wayes, and notorious practices, and horrid misdemeanours; for there is no Statute that takes Cognizance of any man, but only as he is a Criminal; And certainly the Righteous Judge of the whole World did never enact any Decree, or Sanction, perfectly to reprobate any mans individual nature, but only to deal with him according to his own works, and personal demerits; so that the very being and essence of a man, cannot possibly be the formal and adequate object of Reprobation: And I really perswade my self, that the unhappy misunderstanding of the several Texts, and various places of Holy Writ, which do seem to assert and insinuate absolute Predestination, or Election, or Reprobation from an eternal Decree, hath been the most powerful and effectual means the Devil hath made use of all along in all Ages of the Church,



# A Discourse of the

## CHAP. I.

I. **F**Atally to betray some men to Spiritual Pride (as well as to that which is Carnal) and to infect their minds with the malignity and the poyson thereof; and this is one of the greatest artifices of the Devil, insidiously to contrive a high opinion of mens selves, and of their own righteousness, to steal into their souls, and so to puff men up with a strange conceit of their own spiritual worth, which is too frequently attended with the greatest contempt and derision of others: And I suppose it hath, and may be easily observ'd, that men of this Predestinarian stamp, have persecuted others with the greatest violence and heat, who have not fully adher'd to their Sect or Party; or embrac't their ador'd opinions: nay, so exceeding fierce they are and have been, that they will admit of none to come within the compass of salvability, which are  
not

## Nature of Gods Decrees.

not the ready Abettors of their espoused Doctrines ; ( as though the very maintaining the Opinion of Gods absolute Election ; would wholly secure our interest, and future happiness ) So great a Prodigy under the Gospel is a conceited and meer phantastick believer, who so highly boasts, that our blessed Saviour hath effected so much for us, that we need not entertain any care, or be at the least pains to do any thing our selves : For some men take up divine Decrees , as a certain *Supersedeas* from duty ; as if they carried in their very nature, a clear dispensation as to the matter of duty and obedience, and not the least obligation to Christian practice. Thus such persons are puff't up with a vain and an imaginary hope of Heaven, and so they hugg, and strangely please themselves only in themselves, in carnal security and spiritual sloth, who do never attempt to go one step forward in the paths and wayes of prescrib'd obedience, yet they still build their weak and infirm belief of coming to eternal happiness ( though they stand still :) such men fondly imagining that they are become very safe, and so lye secure



cure in the warm bosome of Predestination. Nay, some confident Zealots in this way, have arrived to so high a degree of insolence, and have been so excessively arrogant, that they have really believ'd, that they by their so easie and facile faith, and as quiet recumbency on Christ (as some term it) or as others have Christned their faith with the name of a bare relying or rolling themselves on our blessed Saviour and his Merits; I say, they have fully perswaded themselves, that they shall fall down right at last into the enjoyment of eternal felicity, as if they had taken possession of Heaven and endless bliss already. These Opinionists so vainly concluding, that they have a firm Basis and ground for their belief, bottom'd on the Doctrine of Gods peremptory election of them, and that from all eternity; so that they may sit still, and never move in the sphere of duty and obedience towards God, and yet that they shall at last be received into the encircling arms of the blessed Jesus. Thus these men do seem to run in the very footsteps of a certain Landgrave of *Turing's* opinion, who being severely reprov'd for

## Nature of Gods Decrees.

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for his highly debauch't life, being presented with a prospect of the dangerous consequence thereof, in order to make due reflections on his miserable condition, that he might be more powerfully prevailed upon unto a real change and renovation; all the defence that this great person makes for himself, is only this, *Si predestinatus sim, nulla peccata poterint mihi regna caelorum auferre*: (that is) If I am absolutely predestinated, the commission of the vilest crimes will never exclude me Heaven: *Si reprobatus, nulla opera valebunt conferre*; If I am reprobated, let me manage my life never so carefully, let me steer my course never so prudently and piously, I shall never arrive at Heaven and Happiness. Thus you clearly see the sad effect and product of mens respective Predestinarian principles, (this unhappy Rock upon which too too many shipwreck themselves). And Suetonius reports in the Life of Tiberius Caesar the Emperour, *Quod circa Deos & religionem negligentior erat, quippe persuasionis plenus omnia fato agi*: thus he did entertain the belief, That all things did move on the immutable Wheel of Destiny and Fate,



Fate, and so he did become perfectly remiss as to the diligent worshipping and veneration of their gods. But we have not so learned Christ, and his Doctrine. 'Tis very strange, that men under the Gospel should be so miserably infatuated, and so sadly deluded with such fond and mistaken confidences, and bolder pretensions: for the Scripture does fully acquaint us with the very condition required to everlasting happiness, which consists expressly in Gospel Obedience; for this is the hinge, on which our eternal salvation moves, and altogether depends: so that it is in vain to urge, that our opinions are true and right concerning the Doctrine of Predestination, when our lives are irregular, our manners crooked, and distorted from the rectitude of Gods Divine Laws and Rules: For the whole purport of the Gospel, is to engage us to be *holy*, and that *in all manner of conversation*, as in 1 Pet. 1. 15. ἐν παντί ἁγιάζετε, in the very turning and conversion of our souls from the World to God. Thus the expectation of blessedness is built on the uprightness and innocency of our lives! Our Saviour him-  
self,

self, and all his Apostles, seem to conspire in this one grand design ; and all their Counsels in the Scripture are directed to this most important end ; and their exhortations are address'd in the most pathetick style, to insinuate into mens breasts, the full belief of the necessity of a pious life, in the exercise of all Christian Graces and Virtues ; For they all unanimously lay the whole stress of our salvation, in a due obedience to God and his Laws ; so that men should not give the least assent to such dangerous premises, whose very conclusions will disengage from the strictest Rules of piety, and which carry the greatest topicks of dissuasion from uprightness and integrity of life and conversation. So that, Lastly, To confirm men in a full belief, that their Names are written in those hidden Records, in the Sacred Books of Heaven, is to have the truth of all become perfectly legible in our most Christian practices here on earth.

CH A P.



## CHAP. II.

**T**His so plausible a Tenet of Gods absolute election of some men to salvation, without the least respect or consideration of true Holiness, of Faith, and Repentance, hath been the strongest engine, and readiest machine, which the Devil hath made use of all along to batter down mens Loyalty and obedience to lawful Government; and it is the greatest incentive to Apostasy from all civil Policy. For the confident Assertors of unconditional Decrees, affirm that they are born heirs apparent of Heaven, and that the right of all Government is intailed and firmly settled upon them; and that they are the mock which must inherit the earth, and so they must rule and only reign therein; such persons espousing that so dangerous a position of some of the Schoolmen, that all Power and Sovereignty, and right of Dominion is founded, and derives its Original from grace, which these men only

only appropriate, and more peculiarly to themselves. Thus some silly Mortals have been deceiv'd with a vain opinion of their own Saintship, and that they enjoy the greatest prerogative of Gods grace; so that some of them (either in a frantick fit, or by the impulse of a giddy Zeal) have trampled upon due government, with the greatest disdain, and contempt. I think I need not produce any other argument to evince this, but only to intreat you to reflect on the Scene of our late miseries in our unhappy National dissensions; when men from desperate Hypocrisie, and greater impudence, pretended to nothing but sanctity, and purity, and tenderness of Conscience, yet they did quickly turn rapacious Wolves, who from the greediness of their appetite, not of their zeal, did soon devour the Revenues of the Church. The very first encouragment, and their greatest inducement thereunto, was their confident presumption of being under the covenant of Gods grace, and that by an absolute Decree of election exclusive of others; now this did inspirit, and highly animate them



them on so disdainfully to tread all Sacred and Civil Power and Policy under foot, and that meerly out of spiritual pride, and a vainer fancy of their own perfections, and higher merits above all that did not side with them, or joyn with their Faction; and so consequently they were firmly perswaded that they were the sole proprietors of all the good things in the World, whosoever call'd themselves, they present owners, and possessors thereof. Thus these violent invaders of other mens Properties did carve too liberally to themselves of the Portion of their neighbours blessings. Indeed the Doctrine of irrelative Predestination puts men on to do and attempt any thing that is seemingly religious, and to act their own sinister ends and interests under the disguise and mask of true piety; for such persons do duly observe and follow the advice of a Politician, that whatsoever design they have in their hearts, it should look out on the people with a face of Religion, most men being decoy'd, and insnar'd with these pious frauds, and as zealous pretences; and there have not been wanting fit instruments, and  
which

which were properly adapted to this great work of carrying on the design advancing the opinion of peremptory Decrees: I mean, Ministers themselves, those Pulpit Incendiaries, who had tongues set on fire, and so kindling the greater Sedition, who indeed had cloven ones still speaking forth division, who made no other use of their Lungs, than as of Bellows to blow up all into a flame of Rebellion; and such their Profelytes and followers being of an apt and predisposed nature, like Gunpowder, they will quickly fly up in the face of lawful Authority, being kindled by the least spark of a seditious spirit; And how readily did too many harken to those treacherous Syrens, & Spiritual Enchanters, who did as quickly betray mens Faith and Loyalty to shipwarck? Indeed there are Empiricks in Divinity, as well as in Physick, who will try all sorts of experiments on the peoples minds and tempers, and who will perturb the most regular and peaceable course of mens actings, and will strive to accelerate mens motions: for such Hotspurs in Religion will priek men so violently  
C, forward



forward towards Rebellion, that the pulse of the peoples obedience cannot keep its due order and time with the well advised laws and constitutions of a Kingdom ; and this causes the greatest fevers of State, the boylings of the irritated passions of men, increasing to an inflammation, till at last they break out, and so unhappily set the whole body of a Nation in a fatal combustion. And to this end, how have some of these Predestinarian furnisiers (and all to advance their so pernicious designs) evaded a plain truth in the Sacred word with a dubious sense, and so have wrackt people into error with the Text, made *quidlibet è quolibet* ? how did they start allegories, where the sense was literal, and all to follow the hunt after irrelative decrees ? How have such Scripture Anatomists made the most curious inspections into the whole body of the Holy Writ, nay, they did search into, and ransack every part of the Old and new Testament, they have embowell'd every seeming probable Text to this very end ; and all to discover some veins of intimation of the pretended absolute election of some

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individual persons, and of the fatal reprobation of others: so that these men (styling and affirming themselves to be *the godly party*) have from hence been encourag'd to unhinge due government, pretending revelation, nay, urging Gospel for it: And therefore our late King of Blessed Memory, did most excellently plead his Regal title against the seemingly devout Innovators, by fully proving to them that our Saviour Christ's Kingdom would fully establish his, and not in the least pluck it down, or subvert it; since the Gospel is the readiest means to perfect Civil policy, and not to destroy it: and therefore he tells us, that it is in vain for any to think to build their Piety on the sadder ruins of their Loyalty, or to become Bankrupts of their obedience to lawful Government, that so they might set up a quicker Trade for Religion; or that they might shake hands with the one, bid a final farewell and adieu to Allegiance, that they may lay the faster hold on their God. But now 'tis most evident on the other side, that our Apostasie from Loyalty argues our greatest defection



even from God himself ; for the refusing to pay due obedience to the supream power, is a perfect denial of our very duty to God : For in *Rom. 13. 1.* S. Paul does absolutely command a ready subjection unto the higher powers, all which is enforced with the most convincing reason and argument, in the following words, *ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἐξουσία, ἀλλὰ ἀπὸ θεοῦ ἀνέστη,* for there is no authority, or power, but it is of God : so that this must be a strange piece of Religion, that pretends to obey God, and that by violating this part of his sacred Law; and can it be interpreted to be true and right zeal, that endeavours to advance real piety, and that by undermining an essential and fundamental part of it, consisting in a due obedience to lawful authority? 'Tis a very irrational and preposterous way to own the power of the great Law-giver, and by resisting due government, to break and reject Gods Sanctions, and Divine Constitutions, (which are hedg'd in, and fenc'd about with the severest threats and comminations) *for he that resisteth, or opposeth the Ordinance of God, receives to himself*

*himself Damnation.* Now the same pacifick temper and spirit of subjection should move in us, as did in the primitive Christians; the same soul of obedience should act as vigorously in our bodies, as it did in theirs, when they were under a *Nero*, a *Dioclesian* or a *Julian*: and our Saviour himself when he did come into the World, did not only command constant submission to the Civil Magistrate (though a cruel Heathen), but he did exemplifie the same in his own practice, and that by paying a Tribute to the *Gentile Emperour*, though he was put to the expence of a Miracle to do it; and that by coining a piece of money in a poor Fishes mouth, as in *Matth. 17. 27.* Indeed the power of a King does take its immediate rise and origine from God himself: for it is expressly declared in the fore-quoted place of the *Romans, Chap. 13. 2.* that there is no power, but it is solely of God; for when either Election, or indeed Conquest, and the same continued by a series of succession, does set a King over the people, it is then the Almighty's proper act; and that either with the people or without them, so



that if with their mutual consent, as in the case of Election, then God at their reasonable desire and request does crown the peoples vertue, and he does still elect in the subjects choice, and men are presum'd to make a ready election of such a one to rule and govern, in whom the greatest eminency of vertue and of power and goodness (the divinity of a King) does seem most conspicuous, and shine forth most glorious: Or if a Monarch is set up and constituted without the common suffrage of the people, as is most evident in that of Conquest, then the Almighty does many times judge a Kingdoms vices by a good Prince or a bad; If by a good one, then 'tis fit and most reasonable, that true vertue should propagate and vindicate it self in the just honour and real power the Lord hath invested him with: On the other side, if this is effected by a bad Prince, 'tis but equally just, that the people should quietly submit the sins of their age and times to the remedy (where God is the Physician) as knowing this to be the readiest means of a healthful Policy; for every one that does fully believe the World to be  
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Gods proper Oeconomy, he must as readily conclude, that the Lord governs the same with the greatest truth and equity; and since by him Kings reign, no man may arrive to so great and horrid a presumption, as to say to a Prince, *What dost thou?* by way of the least correction; for in that very instant he reproaches God himself: for a King does not govern the people by his will, but God does really do it by the Kings will: so that men by resisting the Constitutions and Ordinance of God, do endeavour to pull the Reins of Government out of his hands; and thus strive to subvert his order and oeconomy; and so such men justly incur that fatal sentence exprest in the most direful punishment in *Rom. 13.2.* that he that resisteth, or opposeth authority, (the real Ordinance of God) receives to himself, not only *νεῖμα*, a temporal judgement, but he reaps the miserable consequence of all in eternal destruction; for he receives to himself damnation. I have insisted the longer on this, to pluck up (if possible) by the roots, some desperate and peremptory Predestinarian Principles (which very probably are transplanted



from Mr. Calvin's Nursery in the last Chapter of the fourth Book of his *Institutions*, or else from the *Popish Seminaries*) all which are grown too high, and are almost become ripe among us: but you know, that when a Disease recurs, the indication for cure, is the first remedy; for daring impiety and rebellion must be weeded out, lest Gods Field be over-run with Thistles, and then Rebel Vice may supplant Loyal Vertue; and so may at last mature a Kingdoms destruction: For then it may seem an easie and indifferent contest, whether the Usurper or the Owner have the best right, multitude and strength swaying the *Mobile* either way; and it may prove a very difficult matter, for truth and right, to subdue greater armies indeed of vices, than really of men: for then the diseases of State will muster themselves into bodies. For what Bankrupt will not hope to recruit his fortunes under him, who makes War upon the Laws? What rapacious Harpy will not expect or hope for) spoil, where there are so many hands to help him? Indeed what vicious person will not let loose the reins to all licentiousness, when the Coercion

Coercion of the Laws of a Kingdom is restrained by the too licentious Sword? And lastly, What will that Nation be in a short time, more than a Den of Wild Beasts, when no man shall acknowledge any coercive Power, but what his own unruly will & meer fancy does warrant and suggest unto him? I have insisted the longer on this Head, to root out that dangerous Principle, which is too fast rivetted in some mens minds and beliefs, That they are absolutely decreed to salvation, let them live and act as they please; and that their being elected to eternal life, will sanctifie and hallow their foulest crimes and enormities in this; so that this opinion becomes both the unhappy Parent and Nurse to the vilest actions, and does highly contribute to the most horrible impieties; and this makes men strain at a Gnat, and swallow a Camel; to pretend niceties and scruples, thereby advancing Rebellion; when all that is desired of Dissenters, is to remove the perverseness of their humour, and to put on meekness and submission to lawful authority, duties which they cannot



cannot but acknowledge to be truly Evangelical: And we not long since might have felt the sad and direful effects of this, when Doctrines truly destructive of Government, were not only contented to lodge in the head, in mens private opinions, but were become as restless, as their minds and fury; or like a malignant humour ambitious of propagating it self and ruine, and that by running down into the hand, to the speedy execution of the most dreadful Murder, to the acting of the most unheard of Tragedy of the most indulgent Prince. Thus seditious Principles sown in some mens breasts (deriving themselves from this so fatal a Doctrine of absolute Election) were almost ripened into action; and their poisonous arrows were directed against Him, who is as the heart in the body of a Nation, which if they had toucht, the Body Politick could not possibly have subsisted, when our Religion and our Laws had both laid a bleeding. Thus these horrible designs had been brought to the birth, had not an infinitely gracious Providence made them become abortive;

abortive: Let us therefore take heed of such men, and of such contagious opinions, as of a peremptory election of men to eternal life (though never so disloyal and disobedient) since all of them do breathe forth the greatest plague, as that of sedition, which would quickly have destroy'd the good and sound Constitution of a Nation, and which possibly would have engag'd us in hotter flames, than they that were kindled by *Romish* Incendiaries, when we should have been condemned to destruction, to fire and to *Smithfield*, not by our Churches enemies, but by them, who pretend to be our Friends and Brethren in the same; and as fatal a ruine might have seised on us for our constant Allegiance to lawful authority, as would ever have made a prey of them, who would firmly adhere to the Principles of their Christian Religion, in opposition to those damnable ones in the Church of *Rome*; and as fierce a persecution might have fell on such, who would own and maintain the Supremacy of our Sovereign, as ever would have on such, that denyed the authority and jurisdiction



diction of the Church of Rome. 'Tis  
 sad to reflect, that our Mother Church  
 should be wounded by her own pre-  
 tended Sons and Disciples that did  
 lye in her Breast; and that some of the  
 off-spring of Judas, should remain a-  
 mong us, to betray our Religion, and  
 our Sovereign; who, if he had no other  
 way to prove his undoubted right  
 and title of ruling over us, yet Al-  
 mighty God by a constant succession  
 of Miracles in the preservation of his  
 Sacred Person, would fully vindicate  
 the same; who is so eminent an Ex-  
 ample of Royal Clemency and Pi-  
 ty, that not so much the great Chara-  
 cter of a Prince, as the shining Ver-  
 tue and Goodness of his Person, would  
 challenge the greatest reverence and  
 subjection; so that men should not  
 have resisted him, not only as Su-  
 pream, but as Goodness is truly Sove-  
 reign in him; not as he is *Pater Pa-*  
*triae*, a Ruling Father of his Countrey,  
 but a Nursing, and most Indulgent  
 Father of the Church; when the  
 Jewels of his Crown do not sparkle  
 forth so great a lustre, as that shining  
 Excellency of his great Soul and Mind;  
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when there is so happy a coincidence both of Power and Vertue concentrated in his Person ; the one does not so much secure the Authority of a King, as the greatness of Vertue makes him truly so.

## CHAP.



## CHAP. III.

3. **T**He erecting this Idol, the advancing this so pernicious a Doctrine of Absolute Election and Reprobation, hath alwayes, and will still prove the greatest Refuge, Shelter and Sanctuary for the most daring Vice and Impiety; such men fondly conceiting, that they had climbed up on high, and had searched the Celestial Archives, and so had seen their Names enroll'd in the Book of Life, and that they are very legible in the Registers thereof; insomuch as they may freely gratifie the more importunate solicitations of their sensual appetites, and follow the stream and tide of their natural corruptions, from this so false and dangerous a Principle, That they shall not perish, or suffer any shipwreck, because they are truly predestinated and appointed to arrive at glory, and safely to come at last into this secure Haven of rest: so that some

some make this Opinion of unconditional Decrees, to open a door to all excess of vice, and superfluity of naughtiness; and such as pretend to wear the Badge and Cognizance of the Lords elected ones, cry out, that they know to whom they rightfully belong, though they act quite contrary to their Masters Commands, and Gods most Divine Precepts, in due submission to which, mens practices (the very life of Religion) do chiefly consist; yet these great Asserters of Absolute Election will endeavour to insinuate a belief into men, that there is no work designed for them, nor no other task or Province set them, or duty enjoyn'd, but only barely to believe in, and as lazily to rely on Christ: So that men need not stir, or move a foot towards the advancement of their eternal safety; and thus they proclaim, that our blessed Saviour is really oblig'd to them, in being so truly careful of bringing nothing of their own unto him: nay, they do proceed farther, to affirm, that they should very much dishonour the freeness of Divine Grace, if they should contribute any thing in order to the acquisition



sition of it, but only continue and lye in a readiness to receive it ; such men expecting that God should work as great a Miracle of his Power on them, as he did of his Mercy and Compassion on that Cripple that did wait at the Pool of *Bethesda*, *John 5. 5.* Some persons pretending that they cannot stir, and that though they lye still, yet Christ himself (the Angel of the Covenant) will put them into those Medicinal Waters, and so they shall be perfectly healed of their sins and wounds. And now to be out of all doubt and fear of depending on their own righteousness, some as impiously declare, and so verifie their real belief in their practices, that the best expedient is, to have none at all ; and that the grants of the Almighty's favour in the eternal Patent of Election of them to eternal life, are so bountiful, free and liberal, that there cannot in reason be expected any duty from them, unless it be a thin and slender piece of gratitude : nay, such pretend, that they can produce and shew the only proper qualification for Gods Grace and Mercy, and that indeed by not being qualified for it at all : 'tis  
not

not for them to run to obtain the price of their high calling, but only to look to God that gives it; for such men bring in the Tenet of Absolute Predestination in barr against enjoyn'd duty; they affirm, that God will not exact a double payment of a single debt, both from Christ their Surety, and them too. Thus this kind of Election does hastily throw the garment of Christs Righteousness on them; and so such persons unhappily conjecture, that their sins and crimes (though never so great and numerous) shall be hid and cover'd therewithal. And lastly, that they are the men, the only advancers of Gods Free Grace; so that the Almighty cannot pretend the least title to their services and obedience, if our blessed Saviours righteousness is imputed to them, by which they shall be justified: and upon this account, these men vainly alledge, God cannot in any colourable plea of Justice require any duty at all from their hands. And now in this very manner, some men miserably deceive themselves, and in these Mazes and Meanders, they many times lose their right way to Heaven; and sometimes

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make too much haste , and that by overlooking the Precepts of our Saviour, and his most sacred injunctions to purity and holiness of life , and all to lay hold of, and grasp Gods promises of assured happiness ; when the tenure or *habendum* of all his blessings runs in a conditional way and style, as in *Matth. 19. 17. If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.* Now then since Gospel duties, and the glorious rewards thereof , are closely linkt , and inseparably joyn'd together, why should any men presume by their practices to break them asunder ? for we must not perswade our selves, that God will pay a hire to them that never labour for it ; or that he will confer a Crown on them, who never run to obtain it in a way of Evangelical holiness : 'Tis the doing of the duties required in the Gospel, that carries us from the *Cape of Good Hope*, and so safely conveys us to the *blessed Land of Promise* ( even Heaven it self ); for we cannot truly arrive to this confidence, of relying on Christ for eternal happiness, without we can evidence our title thereunto , by a sincere obedience, and due conformity of

of life to Gods holy Laws and Mandates: He that entertains a contrary belief and perswasion, is like that person, whose folly stands upon record, as well as his name, at *Athens*, who very wildly imagin'd, that all the Ships that did come within the compass of his eye and prospect, must needs be his own; when this meer fancied right serv'd only to fill his head with a greater Lunacy and Frenzy. Now the instance runs parallel with the foppish humour of the men of the Predestinarian impression, who nurse themselves up with the vain hopes of receiving the benefit of the Gospel Promises of a state of blessedness, because they really imagine that they are fore-ordain'd thereunto, by an inevitable Decree of the Almightyes; and 'tis solely from this origine, of a presumptuous and as bold an imagination, that a man derives this groundless title to happiness, when 'tis the real performance of the duties of holiness, that fits and capacitates us for it: so that this Sect of men do plainly set Gods Promises of everlasting felicity at open defiance, and wage war with his Precepts; and think that the Lords so



bountiful intendments of mercy through Christ, are so large and generous, that they do disannul and supersede what his Precepts in his sacred Word do so strictly enjoin; when 'tis evident, that the divine affirmations are very express and positive all along in the Scriptures, as in *Luke 13. 5. Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*, (since true repentance is the indispensable qualification for eternal life): and it is as often repeated, and as passionately inculcated, *Except ye believe, ye shall dye in your sins*, *John 8. 24.* (true faith being the great instrument of procuring of pardon and remission of sins, and so consequently of everlasting life). To what end should a Prince give forth, and promulgate his Laws, if not to be obeyed? and the great God his divine Commands and Precepts, pressing to true holiness and sanctification of life, if they do not require our due observance? The life of true faith, consists in action; and Christianity is not barely a speculative, but an active science: for certainly we must all seriously, and duly reflect on what we are to do and act for Christ, as well as what we are to

to receive from him: yet on the contrary, this is the old sign, and anciently pretended mark of Predestination, wholly for men to acquiesce, and solely to rest on our blessed Saviour and his merits, and to aspire after nothing of their own: And now this Doctrine is pleaded in defence and patronage of the greatest sloth, and of an easie succumbency, of a careless neglect of all Christian duties and obligations thereunto: So that while men own the fundamental Articles of Christian Religion, and so long as they bear Christ's badge and cognizance, they vainly conjecture they are secure, and none must so much as question their progress in Christianity. As long as the *Jews* did enlarge and dilate their Phylacteries, (in which as in scrolls of Parchment, was written the Divine Law) they then did think they might abridge and contract their practices of it. Now you know that Souldiers must not barely own their General, but must be in a readiness to fight in a joint vindication of him and his cause, and of their own interest involv'd in his; so that he that wears a Sword, and yet keeps it in the sheath,



shall never conquer the meanest enemy ; and such a Souldier is no more to be accounted of, than he that carries no Weapon at all into the field. The true Christian must still continue in constant service and action : for indeed it is all one, not to have Arms, ( the weapons and enablements of Divine Grace ) bestow'd on us in our Christian Warfare , as not to make a ready use of them against all our spiritual enemies : 'Tis equally alike dangerous to disavow our Christian principles, as not resolvedly to act in constant obedience and fidelity to them : Now does this Doctrine of absolute Election include the genuine notion of believing unto salvation ? and does it declare the proper nature of justifying faith, (*without which it is impossible to please God*) ? certainly no : Why then should such horrid Impostors thus flatter men into misery and ruine ? for such a faith as is barren of the fruits of good works, bears its own malediction and curse. Besides, how comes it to pass, that our too forward Believers get up, and so hastily ascend to the most exalted degree of faith in Christ, ( which consists in a real dependence

pendance on his righteousness for salvation) when they have none of their own to adhere and cleave to; that is, such as is bottom'd and founded on an entire and uniform holiness of heart and life, which our blessed Saviour and his divine Laws do so strictly exact and require? Whence is it, that this sort of men climb up so quickly to the very top bough, and supream act of belief, which yet must derive it self, and so spring from its due and proper root which is sincere obedience of life? I am sure that saving faith, the uppermost branch thereof, does not grow so high, or mount up with such early confidence, without spreading and enlarging it self in the constant observation of all Gods holy Commands and strict Injunctions, the due performance of which brings forth, and effectually produces all the fruits of a *lively faith*, without which, S. James does plainly tell us, *faith is dead*, altogether sapless and ineffectual, as in James 2. 26. Well then, to conclude this particular, To expect mercy through Christ without true righteousness of heart and life, is the worst and the most infirm foundation to build



our hopes of future bliss upon ; and this is but a manifest argument of a downright and daring presumption , notwithstanding the violent opposition in the gainsayings of the irrelative Predestinarian Teachers, and the louder noise of those Monsters in opinion. Indeed this kind of croaking Frogs did hop from that foul *Geneva* Lake ; and this sort of Vermin did take their birth and being from the corrupt and spurious Doctrines of that place ; the poisonous exhalation and stench whereof, hath infected most of the purest air of *Christendom*, as I shall fully evince in my ensuing Discourse. I might now proceed to present you with divers others as dangerous and malignant effects , and as pernicious consequences of this so desperate an assertion of Absolute Decrees ; but I do not intend , that this small Essay, and a few casual reflections ( designed for the better satisfaction of a private Gentleman ) should swell into too great and big a bulk, though they might be easily enlarg'd into a Volume.

C H A P.

## C H A P. I V.

4. I shall now endeavour to state this so weighty a Question, and to give you a clear light into this so obscure a point in Divinity, which truly is rather made so, and that by the mists and clouds of Controversies arising about it. The Question plainly in the issue is this, Whether the Almighty by any positive act of eternal election hath absolutely predestinated some particular men, a certain number of them, to everlasting salvation? and that he hath as really, and as absolutely decreed, consign'd, and appointed others by any peremptory act of reprobation to eternal destruction, and damnation? Or, whether God hath made any real Decrees inclusive of some individual, single, determinate persons (either in *massâ nondum conditâ*, or *corrupta*, take in either the *Supra*, or *Sublapsarian* way, that is, either man not made, or else lying in



in the corrupt Mass) and that he hath made Decrees truly excluding others? (that is) that the Almighty hath from all eternity decreed to save an inconsiderable number of men, and leave the major part of mankind without a possibility of true Repentance in order to Salvation; and that he hath as fully determin'd their reprobation, without the least respect to their sins, or without any consideration of their personal transgressions; and that God hath done this by the absolute Prerogative of his Power, and Dominion over his Creatures? All which, in submission to better judgments, and to men of a greater *acumen* than my self, I utterly deny; and I presume this position cannot be suspected to introduce any novel opinion, since it is the very same Thesis that was asserted by our eminent Bishops and learned Divines, which were at the Synod of *Dort*, against the Provincials and others, where they unanimously affirmed that the real cause of mans Damnation is not on Gods part, but his own; yet here I am not so precarious as to beg the suffrage of a *Triumviri*, or somewhat more,

more, of an inconsiderable company of men: This is no more than judicious Mr. *Hooker* does as readily acknowledge, that we must condemn our selves as the only causes of our own misery. And this Doctrine, that it is Gods absolute will, that his Decrees concerning mens future estate shall be conditional, as having a real respect to our Obedience, or Rebellion, our Faith or Infidelity; I say, this so Orthodox a Tenet is as ancient as *Ignatius* himself, who lived in the Apostles times, and it was scarce question'd for almost 400 years after our Blessed Saviour; and in that Century some bring in S. *Austin* to father that spurious opinion of unconditionate Predestination, *Scriptores veteres omnes prater unum Augustinum putarunt aliquam causam electionis in nobis esse.* Now S. *Austin* himself does peremptorily deny the contrary opinion in divers places of his Tract *de Perseverantia Sanctorum*, and especially in his Retractions he placeth the Object of Gods election of man *in fide prævisâ*; and the good Father does affirm this in his first Book, writing to *Simpli-*  
*cins, quia elegit nos Deus ante Mundi*  
*consti-*



*constitutionem, non video quomodo sit dictum, nisi de præsentiâ fidei, & operum pietatis.* So that you see at last, *S. Austin* was a greater favourer of my opinion, than ever he was a violent opposer of it. Thus you may perceive that men become the proper instruments of their own ruin, and every person must be certainly concluded to be *supplicii sui faber*, the forger of his own Shackles, and all men do by their own sins and iniquities truly reprobate themselves: so that eternal destruction becomes mens choice, and not their unhappy destiny; and our misery derives its original not from God's, but our own wills; insomuch that we need not seek for any hidden or foreign cause, but our own secret and open impieties: And I shall now proceed to vindicate this my present assertion by these degrees, That men are sav'd by Gods especial grace influencing their Wills, by conferring a power, and ready propension on the Will to cooperate with his grace and goodness; and men are not made partakers of eternal Salvation by the meer force and necessity of a fatal Decree, as some in the world would have it.

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This opinion is but Stoicism revived, and the spurious Doctrines of the Heathens adopted Orthodox and genuine; and I shall fully evidence to you that no man is in the least compell'd with a perfect necessity of sinning against God, as Mr. *Calvin* expressly affirms in his Institutions, *Lib. 1. c. 18. hic justo Dei impulsu agit, quod sibi non licet*; (that is) that a man by the just impulse of God does that which is not lawful. Now what is unlawful is comprehended under the real notion of sin, that being the transgression of the Law. And in order to this my intended design, I shall endeavour to lay open to you the sense of Gods Holy Spirit in our two Protestant Church Articles, in that of the Tenth of Free-will, and the other the Seventeenth of Predestination; whereby it shall easily appear that the Doctrine of Predestination, and also that of Free-will may, and do really consist together, so that we need not refer the deplorable misery of the Sons of *Adam* *ad solum arbitrium divina voluntatis*, to the sole Divine Will (as Mr. *Calvin* is pleased to do), but to the true cause of mans ruine in the  
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horrid perverseness of his own Will. For the highest act of the Divine intention is to save all men, if by the wickedness of their own perverse wills, they do not altogether frustrate the same, and that by refusing the gracious offers of Salvation by Jesus Christ, and by not observing and performing the real conditions on which the proposals of Divine mercy are made and founded; for the Almighty does openly and solemnly profess, in 2 *Pet.* 3. 9. that he is not willing that any shall perish, but rather on the contrary, that all men should come, or return to repentance. So that there is no unwillingness in God to save all men, but it is the great neglect or non-observance of their duty, which truly argues mens own unwillingness to attain so blessed an end; insomuch that we cannot lay the least charge or blame upon God in any thing, but only on man who doth voluntarily bring death and the appendant misery on himself: and if God delights not in the temporal death of a sinner, he cannot possibly in the eternal destruction of him, which as it is a judgment so terrible that it cannot come within

within the compass of humane apprehension to conceive the misery of it ; so it is altogether inconsistent with the infinite divine goodness willingly to inflict it on any, as 'tis expressly declared in *1 Tim. 2. 4.* who will have all men to be saved, and in order to that, to come to the knowledge of the truth ; or as the Greek version renders the words, *εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας*, possibly to the acknowledgment or confession of this very truth.

Now that I may go through the method proposed for the confirming of this Problem, I might perform the first part of my undertaking by clearly explaining, and as easily reconciling all those *ἀσίστατα*, or several Texts of Scripture, which do seem to oppose these two main points of Predestination, and the liberty of mans will, one to the other ; but this is done by better and abler Pens, and acuter judgments, than I can in the leastwise pretend to. However, as it is necessary that there should be a due analogy and perfect correspondence of divine truths throughout the whole Canonical Scripture ; so it is equally re-



requisite, that the same eternal verities and doctrines should be stated and fully determined by the sacred word of God, and that by a strict disquisition, and as diligent examination of it, which the worthy Author of the Book called *Deus Justificatus*, and divers others have elaborately done: Now the reason of the seeming contradictions in the Scripture, where the Holy Pen-men, and Registers of the divine will do frequently seem to oppose and contradict one another, and sometimes seemingly themselves in these great forementioned points, (the occasion of which cannot in the least be charg'd on the Almighty, who is still One and the same for ever; neither can it derive its original from these divine Secretaries, since they were abundantly inspir'd, and so could not possibly be guilty of the least falsity, or of any imaginable lightness; but I say the reason of this) may probably be deriv'd from the Pen-mens weakness, and diversity of judgments (as men), who receiving the mind of God by immediate inspiration, and not altogether by verbal

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bal or oral dictate (that is, word by word) so that the Prophets were to cast the matter inspir'd into the mould of their own humane fancy; and they were as well to model it by their own private judgments, and so to report it to men according to their present capacity to understand it themselves, and their ability to preach it to their Auditors; and in this manner they did record it to others. This being plainly premis'd and presum'd, it must be as reasonably granted, and as firmly concluded, that all the holy Prophets and Apostles did joyntly speak, and so declare one, and one only truth, which is Gods Spirit, or his divine word; and that howsoever the Inditers of Holy Writ may seem to clash with one another in words, yet the sense and meaning of them carries Divine inspiration along with it; and if any seeming difference does occur in those Sacred Oracles, it must therefore consequently be allow'd, and interpreted to be the humane spirit in the expression, or in the Translation, and not the product

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duct of Gods Spirit in the matter of truth it self, in which the true Vertue and proper energy of the Holy Scriptures do chiefly consist.

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**CHAP.**

CHAP. V.

I Shall now therefore proceed to lay down the most reasonable definition of Predestination, as'tis truly consonant, and altogether agreeable with the Doctrine of the Seventeenth Article of the Church of *England*, and the very tenor of Faith in the Sacred Scriptures, concerning this great fundamental point, and as it may duly consist with the nature of the liberty of mans will. Gods Predestination therefore is the propheticall declaration, or evidence of his eternal prescience or foreknowledge, whereby he hath by his Holy Prophets and Apostles given the clearest signification to his Church, what will be the effects of the operation of his Divine Essence, of his infinite goodness in nature and grace, upon all men in the world, throughout all successive ages from the Fall to the last day of Judgment. From which definition



it does most evidently appear, that Gods providential goodness and his salvation is equally extended to all men *ex parte Dei*, as to the Almighty's part; and that his evident impaling of a peculiar, the Church, is truly inclusive of the impaled, but not in the least exclusive of any; for that indeed not only *genera singulorum*, a small handful of a people; but *singuli generum*, the whole harvest of mankind are and may be truly brought within the enclosure of the true Church: for the pale thereof is not like the hedge of a Ground, or Park, determined and so determining, fixt and immovable; but rather it is like unto that Fishers net mentioned in the Gospel, which was of so vast a compass, as that it did catch of every sort, as our Saviour tells us in *Matth. 13.47.* That the Kingdom of Heaven, that is, of Gods grace here, was like unto a Net cast into the Sea, and so gathered of every kind; thus the Church of God is set forth by an easie resemblance of fishermens Nets, which are at all times extendible, and so may every day and hour be enlarged, and all to make a greater enclosure,

closure, as there is, or may be a fit opportunity for it ; some nets only keeping what they have in their compass, these taking all that they can reach, according to that of our blessed Saviour to his Disciples, that he will *make them fishers of men*, not only in the pretended limited Church, or See of Rome; but in the vast and wider Ocean of the world. So that all men that are evidently brought under the Covenants of Gods grace and mercy, may be truly said to be elected: and my reason is this; because that they are elected to the time of the publication and preaching of the Gospel; yet other men are not *ex opposito*, (that is) on the other side rejected; neither can they in the leastwise be reprobated, because some of them may not, or are not as yet received into the arms of the Christian Church: however they still are and may continue in a possible state of redemption, so that they are truly chosen to eternal life, that receive our Blessed Saviour; and they are certainly reprobated, that still reject him, as he is exhibited under the dispensation of



the Gospel: and therefore our Protestant Church in the stating this so weighty an Article of Predestination, does with the greatest caution, and the most real charity, make mention only of the evidence of the divine goodness in Election, from the gracious effects of Gods holy Spirit, in those persons, who are within the hearing of, and so do as quickly embrace Gods gracious Calling in the ministry of his Sacred Word, and the present Article makes no mention of any, whose ears the Almighty hath at any time stopt, but only of such prodigiously wicked wretches who have obstinately stopt their own; the forementioned Article speaks not of any persons, who should not, but who will not become obedient to the calling of Gods especial mercy and grace in Christ; who either leave Gods spirit for the gratifying the flesh, or else who only pretend, and so use the name of Gods spirit in the greater abuse of the flesh, in the unreasonable lusts and the insulting desires thereof. By what hath been said, I presume the violent Asserters  
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of peremptory Decrees (this generation of men, these cunning Vermine) may be easily driven from, and ferreted out of their great hold of absolute Predestination.

## CHAP. 4



## C H A P. VI.

6. **A**Nd now I come to that which is farther considerable; such persons should well weigh, and as duly consider how little ground they have to flatter themselves with a sure and undoubted interest in Gods grace and favour from this so pernicious a Doctrine; for it is not fatally constituted what particular men should be truly pious, and others as horribly impious, (as *Piscator* does so positively maintain); or that all the imaginable care, and strictest diligence that men can use towards the attainment of salvation does become altogether vain and really ineffectual; for all this will plainly appear to the contrary, from the truth of the doctrine that is clearly asserted in the Tenth Article of the Church of *England* concerning the nature of mans Free-will. And now to make all things clear, convincing and perspicuous, I shall give you as reasonable, and as just a definition of Free-will, as truly consonant with this

this Tenth Article of our Church, as really opposed to the doctrine of irrelative Predestination, as the same is made by some to include Election *exclusive* (that is) with its opposite, as certain reprobation of others; Free-will then I take to be this; 'Tis the absolute indifferency of the will (continuing in obedience to the intellectual faculty) to the object propounded by the same intellect, judging according to right reason. Now this was the Primitive Free-will in the state of perfection; which liberty was almost lost to man in his unhappy state of corruption; for all men are exceeding prone and propense to evil, by the pravity of their natures; however none are compell'd, or necessitated to sin from any final dereliction of God, arising from any fatal Decree: For the freedom of the will was only as a habit laps'd, and degenerated into a ready disposition to evil; so that it must be confess'd, that *voluntas est semper libera, sed non semper bona*; 'tis evident in the Fall of mankind that the liberty of the will was only corrupted, and so suffer'd a great depravation; and thus it became infirm  
in



in relation to its actings for virtue and goodness ; and in this manner the will of man is weak as to the morality of its actings ; for there was no absolute destroying, or any annihilating the faculty of the will, no more than it can be, that the bodies of the great Luminaries of the Heavens (the Sun and the Moon) should cease to be, and become extinct, and that by suffering an eclipse : For since the fall of man, there still remain some faint glimmerings of the light of the freedom of the Will, as is very clear from men, who by the help of the means of grace and Gods spirit co-operating therewithall, may do Gods will, and perform the same, and that in order to eternal happiness ; though we have naturally nothing that is good, but what is derived from the goodness of Gods grace. But now what perfection the Will and the understanding had in the state of perfect nature, in some measure is redeem'd, and restor'd by the Almighty's working in the spirit of Grace (the Will being made free again by the spirit of Sanctification and Holiness, and the Understanding it self made in some

some kind perfect by the spirit of divine illumination) and that by enlightening the soul with the brighter beams of Gospel truth; and all this is eminently effected in those that are converted and truly regenerate, who sincerely follow the exemplary life of our Blessed Saviour; so that a good and a real Christian may be as truly said to have, and as really enjoy a Free-will by Gods grace since the Fall, as he had and was possesst of by nature before the Fall: and then it must be as frankly confest, that the unregenerate and viler sort of men have not this liberty of the will; but this does not derive from any positive Decree of Predestination, but from the greater prevalency of sin and corruption in, and the cruel tyranny of Satan on mens nature, which so unhappily propagated sin, and improv'd it into actual transgression, which yet the Almighty does labour to overcome indifferently in all men, so far forth as he can reach the calling of his grace, and so powerfully prevailing by his holy spirit, on those mens tempers, to whom he can freely indulge the means of his great goodness and mercy through Christ: So that



that if the means of divine grace do not produce the same blessed effects on some, as we see they do visibly on others, the fault is no way to be attributed to the blessed means of our redemption by Christ, but to the desperate perverseness, and greater obstinacy of some mens hearts ; for 'tis most clear that the sacred Word of God may become the favour of death to one, and of life to another ; and the Bee may suck hony , and the Spider poyson from the same flower of Gods goodness. The same Apple in Paradise had in it the Blessing and the Curse ; yet we cannot reasonably affirm, that the Curse was made by the Creator, but only by the creature in the abuse of Gods blessings : thus you may easily see, that predestination then is nothing else, but the evidence of the effectual or ineffectual working of Gods holy spirit on the corrupt hearts of men, which becomes truly discernible , and is only discovered by every mans life, whereby one appears to enjoy Free-will, by being reunited unto God by the renewing of their minds ; all which is fully declared in the sanctity of their conversations : others have not this liberty of  
their

their Will, by living without the favouring means of Gods grace; so that such men are only under Gods general providence in the state of corruption; or else these persons being made partakers of the advantages of Gods grace, and yet resisting the most importunate persuasions and dictates of Gods holy spirit, to embrace the tenders of Divine mercy; such men I say do become altogether incapable of this liberty of the will by a happy re union with God in Christ, which the Saints do truly enjoy according to that Text, *John 8. 36. If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.* So that upon this very account, the reason seems very forcible and convincing to me, and may become very obvious to all; why the bent of the holy Scripture does seem to encline in some measure to absolute Predestination, (which Mr. Calvin with his admirers; is so violent an Asserter of) since 'tis only the singular evidence of Gods providential goodness in the then visible Church under the Old Testament, and their flourishing state in the fruition of the divine favours above all other people  
in



in the world; and which besides, admits of a farther demonstration from the earnest and passionate endeavours of the Prophets, and holy Pen-men, from the evident and clear manifestation of Gods goodness to endear the people the more to God by due obedience, and sanctification of life; as is very observable from *Moses* and *Joshua*, and others arguing from Gods signal and miraculous mercy to them; by a just inference of reason and equity affirming, that Gods peculiar people ought to make a due resentment of, and as ready an acknowledgment of his divine favours, as you may read in *Josb. 24. 13, 14.* And I have given you a Land (saith the Lord) for which you did not labour, and Cities which you built not, and ye dwell in them; of the Vineyards and Oliveyards which ye planted not, do ye eat. Now therefore serve the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and truth; and in order to that, put away the Gods which your Fathers serv'd on the other side of the Flood, and in Egypt, and serve ye the Lord. Now what I have premis'd in the general by way of induction to my propos'd Thesis, that the doctrine of Predestination,

and

and that of Free-will may stand both together, and may very well consist, to establish the analogy of the truth of Gods spirit, in the holy Scriptures, I think may sufficiently appear to any unbiaſt perſons, and indeed to all that are not fortified with a reſolv'd prejudice againſt it; and it cannot be contradicted by any, but by the violent malice of ſuch who are the avowed profeſſors of irreſpective and abſolute Decrees.

## C H A P.



## C H A P. VII.

7. **H**OWever in the next place, I presume this Classis of men will not at all deny, that man was created at first with Free-will; which if they shall violently oppose, yet I think the same seems to be insinuated from Gen. i. 26. *And God said, let us make man after our image, after our likeness:* by the plain meaning of which place of Scripture, I understand, that man was created in all things like unto God at first, (but only in the finiteness of his Essence, as being a creature) and so consequently man must become *liberum Agens*, a free agent, as the Almighty is *Agens liberrimum*: but if this is not forcible enough to prevail with some Scepticks, we have an undeniable proof of mans Free-will before the Fall, in that first Institution of Gods own divine appointment, *viz.* that solemn Sign, and cautional Sacrament of obedience, which was fully

ly to confirm men in the real state of perfection, by that great duty of abstinence (in the midst of so plentiful an indulgence of Gods universal bounty) for then there was a mutual pledge of Gods honour, and mans duty and homage, in the single prohibition of one only Tree, of the knowledge of good and evil, as in Gen. 2. 16, 17. *And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou maiest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely dye:* So that had not man enjoy'd the freedom of his will, this essay of negative obedience in not eating, had been but a meer piece of delusion, and not indeed the least argument of Gods love; for if man was not endued with a real power, to eat, or not to eat, this had been but a vain and empty proposal: but that it was otherwise, is plainly evident; for that the Apostate Devil did make, and as subtilly did contrive, that the eating of the forbidden fruit should become a firm snare to catch poor man by, and so to become the ready means to destroy that blessed



communion that he had with God,  
 and thereby to bring him into the  
 same deplorable condition with him-  
 self, and that by propagating his crime  
 and ruine unto us. Now as pride,  
 from the Devils reflex on his own cre-  
 ated perfection, made him to rebell  
 against God for Supremacy; the same  
 sin which was the proper cause of his  
 fall, was the fittest matter for a bait  
 for the temptation of man, (pride in-  
 deed being truly prolifick, and so natu-  
 rally propagating pride;) and there-  
 fore what God had instituted to pre-  
 serve man in the constant fruition of  
 his cordial grace and blessings, this  
 fore-mentioned pledge of true humi-  
 lity was unhappily converted into the  
 poyson of pride, which did beget in  
 man the like horrible rebellion, which  
 was the sole cause of mans apostasy  
 from God, and not any positive De-  
 cree of the Almighty's; as some do  
 blasphemously affirm, that *Adam* did  
 fall by the divine ordination, and that  
 it could not otherwise be, but that he  
 must of necessity fall, and so sin in re-  
 spect of Gods antecedent Will and  
 Counsel: for so Mr. *Calvin* expressly  
 affirms, *Nonne ad eam qua nunc pro*  
*dam-*

*damnationis causâ obtenditur, homines Dei ordinatione predestinati antea fuerant?* as it is in his Instit. B. 3. Ch. 23. But I shall make it evident, and it will clearly appear to the contrary; for man emulating the perfection of his Creator, did voluntarily cast away his subjection, and so reject his due homage to God (as a creature): and thus he miserably fell into the like condemnation with the Devil. So that mans sin of eating was his own voluntary act, thus creating and effecting his own judgement, when he did too sadly feel the misery of being out of God, and that by appearing naked, who was before sufficiently clad with innocence, as with a garment. Now by this it evidently follows, that man had at first a *posse non cadere* (as S. Austin allows) a perfect liberty to stand or fall; and so he was in an equal possibility of sinning or not sinning; his condition then was so pois'd, that it was in the creatures choice to turn the scale, as easie for *Adam* to have omitted that fatal act of eating, as to have done it. For man was invested with a real power, not to fall by disobedience; and now since the nature of the creature did



consist in finiteness of perfection ; for if God could not create any infinite, (which is really impossible, for there can be but one truly infinite;) then the Almighty could not preserve man in an estate above what he had created: for if *agens liberrimum*, the most free agent, do emanate himself in the production of *agens liberum*, as it clearly appears, the Lord did in all reasonable creatures; then I say, it becomes truly impossible, that *agens liberum* should be *agens liberrimum*: Now no consequence can be more plainly deducible (for there can be but one *liberrimum*, which is God and he only) unless some will as blasphemously as irrationally affirm that the creature might have been created Co-God, and then God had not created *agens liberum*, but *instrumentum liberrimi*, an instrument of the most free agent: and thus man had not enjoy'd any liberty of his Will, but had been meerly passive in all. But the contrary is very obvious and equally manifest, for that the eating the forbidden fruit was not only a voluntary natural act, but it was the real effect of solid argument, and of a most rational deduction, when the  
 Devil

Devil did suggest so powerful a persuasion to *Eve*, that she should be advanced and mounted into an higher sphere of perfection by her knowledge, as a cause (*viz.*) of eating the interdicted fruit, (this being the Devils inescation of the sensitive appetite) by gilding over the sin, by presenting the object Beautiful and Charming to behold, whereby he did assault the womans judgment first, who (being the weaker part of man) was easiest convinc'd; And indeed being the other part of man, was likeliest to insinuate the sin of eating by a greater sympathy of affection, as well as by the prevailing power of persuasion and argument. The truth being thus stated, I shall now proceed to discover and shew to you, the natural liberty of the Will, which to have is to be absolutely indifferent to choose, or refuse from the dictate of right reason, (as is fully intimated in my foregoing definition); therefore whatsoever the Will shall consent to, as the firm conclusion of the understanding *sub specie boni*, under the colour of that which is good; or if it be *verum bonum*; this indeed was the state



of perfection in which man was created at first, and in which he might have still continued, had not the Devil, this intellectual creature of a higher order, made an assault on mans understanding; and so convincing him by the power of his seeming rational consequence, he unhappily imposed on man *bonum apparens* for *verum*, a seeming and an apparent good for a true real one: for the evil of knowledge did quickly bring man to the ignorance of good; for such was the Devils sophistry, that he did argue very fallaciously, *à male conjunctis ad bene divisa*: But when man had once out of a curious wantonness nauseated the bounty of his Creator in all the good fruit of the garden of Paradise, and all to long after the worst part of the tree of knowledge, (yet that was as good as the rest, till man did lust after the evil of it, (*viz.*) the evil of disobedience) then the Orb of man was to circulate in a sphere of miseries, who yet did endeavour to find out a remedy for that evil knowledge, which did consist in the real cognition of sin and evil. And now you may here see the great artifice, and horrid im-

Imposture of the Grand enemy of mankind: for when he tempted *Eves* greedy curiosity, if he had been so fair and candid, as plainly to have told her, That all that she and *Adam* did know now, and see and taste and hear, was truly good; Would ye needs know what is really bad? (that is) would you be ignorant, blind, and miserable? (for this is implied in the nature of the temptation to Apostasie from God). But when the Devil did present his temptations like to those pictures, which on the same side do equally represent the different shapes of an Angel, and of a Devil, thus shewing the Angel first, it was the womans vain inquisitiveness that did prompt her, as thinking it was no great matter to look with an oblique eye, or assant upon that of the Devil, by which she was visibly ensnar'd into ruin: and thus she did unhappily mistake Death for Life, the temptation being like the poyson of those Spanish flies of *Beelzebub*, which being given in a Potion incend Lust, and torment nature it self into a deplorable state of misery. And now you may clearly perceive that man did



run out of Paradise by his sin, before ever God did drive him forth thence; which he did, by stepping out of the way of Gods express command; and this was his direct going out of God.

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CHAPTER

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CHAP. VIII.

8. **S**O now I have shew'd you man's primitive State of perfection, I might here make a farther discovery what an infinite mass of goodness and virtue mankind did lose by becoming bankrupt of his obedience to God, though he was not altogether deprived of the liberty of his Will in some kind and measure: For there was not the least necessity by any positive Decree of God, that he that was created good, should know, and truly experiment evil; no more than there is, that he that sits at a full and plentiful table must needs taste, and so eat of every Dish that is set before him; the temptation might have been wanting, and then man had been carried on by the strength of right reason only to what was really good: neither could it be possible, that God, whose nature is infinite power, and wisdom and goodness, should be the



the Author of evil, as some very impiously assert, that the Almighty did Predestinate and truly decree mans Fall; then they must of necessity conclude that God himself was the real cause of mans Lapse and Apostasie from him; for his Divine Decree is God himself, according to that known maxim in the Schools, that *quicquid dicitur de Deo, est ipse Deus*; and on the other side there was none, neither could there be any imperfection to be propagated out of created perfection in man himself: a sweet fountain cannot of it self send forth bitter waters; the evil of the Tree of knowledge was not in the Apple, but in the Tempter, and the man; for there was nothing but what was truly good in the negative command of abstinence to *Adam* in not eating the forbidden-fruit; the evil of it was begotten by the prophane touch of a wanton appetite: And 'tis the same in the Blessed Sacrament of Christs Supper, it is not he that eats, but he that does it unworthily, shall certainly receive *κείμα*, Damnation or judgment; and *procul, O procul este, profani*; if Cordials

als turn to Poyson, 'tis not deriv'd from their own nature, but from the corrupt stomach of the Patient: 'tis the chanel you know that gives the water the tincture; and if it hath a strange relish, it is not to be found at the spring-head, it must rather take its rise from the injection of some extraneous substance. So that sin, this disease of the Soul, was not created, but was truly begotten, and not produc'd by nature, but the creature himself; and now the remedy must be enquir'd after, and fought for; distortion and dislocation must be rack't into its due position, and proper place; the crooked must be made straight, and the rough places plain, which could only be by the coming of our Blessed Saviour into the World, who did remove the asperities and roughness of the old way, and stricter Law, that mankind might go on evenly by the supports of a true Faith, and the concurrence of supernatural strength, in the way of Gospel Obedience.

CHAP.



## CHAP. IX.

9. **N**OW I suppose I have clearly and fully discovered the truth of the doctrine of Free-will, and that before the Fall of Man. In the next place, I shall endeavour to vindicate the liberty of mans Will in some measure after his Lapse, by which the doctrine of absolute Predestination will be easily superseded. Now some persons have attempted fully to evince the same from Gen. 3. 22. *And the Lord God said, Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil; and now lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the Tree of Life, and eat, and live forever, &c.* From which place of Scripture it hath been inferr'd, and as confidently affirm'd by some men, that there was a salve for this sore fall created in Paradise; (*viz.*) to be drawn from the Tree of Life, which God in his just judgment would not suffer man to make as quick an application

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on of: upon which account 'tis said that the Almighty did drive him out of Paradise, and did then guard the Tree of Life with Cherubims and Angels, and that with a flaming Sword. Truly for my own part I shall not make it my business to fetch any argument from hence forcibly to conclude mans Free-will; for I cannot understand that any Tree in the garden had this vivifick virtue, and immortalizing nature in it self; for as I look upon the other Tree of Good and Evil to have no such quality in the bare fruit, but in the prescrib'd pledge and particular instance of obedience (as the branch of the Tree, which God did command *Moses* to throw into the waters of *Marah*, had no innate and immediate vertue to make the bitter waters sweet, but by the preceptive use of it:) for so long as *Adam* did continue under duty, he had a free indulgence of Gods blessing in all the rest of the trees in the garden; but now man having by his Lapse and disobedience deprived himself of the fruit of this Divine bounty, and accordingly being forc't out of that happy place, God is in the fore-mentioned



mentioned Text said by a sharp Irony to deride mans sin, and so truly to upbraid him with the abuse of his real favours; and now God fully knowing that the delectableness and sweetness of all the trees of the Garden was a like loss to man, so that in the condition he was in, he could relish no more of Gods goodness in them, than the depraved palate of a sick man, to whom sweet things become bitter, and pleasant ones truly nauseous: therefore the Lord does seem (driving poor man from the Tree of Life) candidly to expostulate with him in the dialect of pity and compassion, as if he had said: Ah wretched man, the food of innocency will nothing avail thee in the state of sin and misery; all that thou now canst taste of God in the creature, must derive it self from the sweat of thine own Brows: Every tree before was a Tree of Life to thee in the state of immortality; but now having brought the Curse of Death upon thy self by thy wilful disobedience, that fruit now will not redeem thee, which formerly would have preserv'd thee; where wilt thou think to find hony and sweetness as before? Thou canst  
now

now being fallen relish nothing but Aloes and bitternefs, and Gods sharper displeasure by reason of thy voluntary transgression. So that the Earth that did before freely pay its tribute and fruit to man, would not after the Fall return the due fruit of his enforc't labour : for his very plough plow'd pains, and the earth did yield him a greater harvest of sweat than of true grain ; when before man did draw plenty of blessings from the exuberant breasts of nature ; and what the Poets feign'd of a Golden age, was as true in the state of Innocency,

*Flavaque de viridi stillabant ilice  
mella ;*

The hony-dew of Heaven did distil upon them through the trees of the Garden ; we never read of death till of disobedience ( that being an Apostasy from life ) ; neither did we feel the sharpness of thorns or thistles, grief and sorrow, till mans iniquity had sowed them in the furrows of the field, and in the corrupted earth of our sinful nature ; and there was not only in the creature,



ture, but after the Fall of man an alteration in the face of the Creator : a dark and dismal cloud of Anger did arise, but the Gospel produc'd a fair Sunshine day which more illustriously did appear in the revelation of Gods mercy in the blessed Jesus. Yet here I shall not be too forward to make excursions beyond the revealed Will of God ; for mans iniquity justly provoking at first, and Gods justice as soon complaining, the Almighty was pleas'd to discover himself in the most perfect forms of his mercy. Now sin did begin, after the Creation was ended, as in *Gen. 1. last verse*, God saw all his works that they were truly good and perfect ; so that he was no way concern'd as the Author of sin. Though some highly blasphemous do imagine, that God seems to own sin, by his very permission of it ; and to have such a kind of partiality, that he can easily dispense with his infinitely pure Essence, that as he is holy, we may be unholy ; as he is just, we may be unjust ; as though darkness could consist with light, and that contradictions may be reconcil'd into the greatest friend-

friendship ; that when sin is the cause of our distance, it could by a safe inference of reason be concluded, that a sinner thereby becomes nearer to God: as though God could be, and not be an avenger of sin, the opposer of his very Being. Thus Gods justice being by sin intraged, he might have appeared in the most dreadful and affrighting shape of Fury ; but he was pleas'd to make a pause, so that the Lord did break forth in light and mercy at last : though Gods justice for sin was rais'd high, yet his mercy overturn'd the scales : though iniquity did lay in its full weight into the balance, yet the Divine goodness overweigh'd : ~~where~~ the Divine compassions being, as the Psalmist tells us *Psal. 145. 9* above all his works. So that instantly the Scene was chang'd from misery to mercy ; a tempest did break forth, yet it dissolv'd it self into a whole shower of blessings: thus ruine did seem to be prefac'd with mercy ; for from the very title page of Gods anger, we may easily read a whole volume of his kindness. For we can no sooner look upon the frontispiece, the very beginning of Holy Scripture,

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where



where we see the ruins of mans integrity by reason of the Fall, but we may as soon discover a Corner-stone to repair this building of the Lord, in that first great Gospel Promise of our Saviour, *Gen. 3. 15. The seed of the Woman shall break the Serpents head.* Thus here shines forth divine mercy even in justice, and life it self in the very sentence of Death; so that now my discourse is gradually descended to the times of the Gospel, wherein you read, *1 Thes. 5. 9. That God hath not appointed, or ordained us to wrath, but to obtain Salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ;* 'tis in the original *ἐκ θέν* (that is) God hath not set up his Creature as a certain mark, fixt by the hand of a fatal Decree, for his anger and fierce wrath to shoot at, and so to become the Trophies of Divine Vengeance, and all to advance the triumph of a severer justice; for I must readily assert that Gods vindictive justice in the punishment of obstinate sinners is his strange act, not in the least his choice, but meerly his necessary refuge, which the Apostate rebel Creature does drive him to; and that though he might in justice, yet he could not in  
mercy

mercy leave any creature under his just condemnation, though the bolder *Sublapsarians* tell us, and thereby would insinuate into men a belief, that God passes by some, and so reprobates them, and that for no other cause than his meer will to exclude men from an eternal inheritance purchast by Christ; when there is certainly no man *ex parte Dei*, but is truly redeemable, and that by the effectual application of the means of Divine grace, which Gods Omnipotency in infinite Wisdom and Goodness did find out, and accordingly does still act in. And though God hath promised that his Spirit shall not always strive with man, as in *Gen. 6. 3.* which is not only true in his oeconomy of the world under the Old Testament, but the Text is as truly propheticall of the dispensations of Gods grace and mercy under the New; yet in this place of Sacred Scripture we are to understand the Lord as if he had said *αὐθρονοῦν* in the most affectionate stile, and in the greatest compassion to mankind: I am troubled to behold the prevailing malignity of evil against my Spirit of Grace; I will therefore timely to prevent the infection, and



growth of iniquity cut the age of man shorter, and of this present wicked generation by an universal deluge. So that from this Text we may evidently perceive the infinite tenderness of Gods love to sinners, and from this very place, the liberty of mans Will after his Lapse may be very easily inferr'd and deduc'd; for there would be no possible striving, if there were no opposition: and which is more considerable, 'tis the Almighty's striving in general for mens due conversion to himself; 'tis not in the least for their ruine and as ready destruction: For though God might have justly punished original sin in all men, yet then in vain would he set himself against the propagation of it by the actual transgressions of them, who are concluded under a most desperate impossibility of repentance for the same. Now this the Doctrine of absolute Decrees does plainly declare. And if it be farther urg'd from the 5. vers. of that 3. chap. of Gen. that every imagination of the thoughts of mans heart was only evil, and that continually; this does really infer no more, than the horrible sad state of mankind since the

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the Fall, so that we must understand this Text only of the wonderful pravity, and too great propensity to sin, and the real reluctancy of mans heart against the operations of Gods spirit and his grace; it cannot in the least be interpreted of an absolute negation of the liberty of mans Will: for if God does conquer by his earnest struggling with men, it must be by their ready submission and obedience to his good spirit of grace, and not by meer force, or by the power of any irresistible Decree. For the Almighty's striving here is not to be adjudg'd a piece of coercion and violence, but only his earnest and importunate pressing of his goodness and mercy, which may be embrac'd, or refus'd of all men indifferently *quoad Deum*, as to Gods part. Why should men then now a-days so niggardly contract the Divine goodness? why should any confine the Lords mercies, since he hath put no limits to them himself? His bounty being as his divine Essence, altogether infinite, and perfectly incomprehensible: The most elevated strains of the most piercing apprehensions can never reach it; Gods mercy being exalted not on-



ly above our highest conceptions, but above all his own works: Why should we then measure the divine goodness by our narrow scantlings, and draw Gods mercy into a lesser chanel, than ever he did intend they should run in? now some by their pernicious Doctrine of irrelative Decrees erect in mens minds the most terrible Image of the Almighty: and how dreadful must their apprehensions be, who look only on the Divine Justice? This is enough to fright them into the saddest despair, when God shall appear in a dress so horrible to them, that he should absolutely condemn men to eternal misery in their first causes, before they have any existence, or the least appearance of a Being: and must poor Mortals be consign'd to infernal darkness, before they have entred on the Regions of Light? And must mushroom man before he hath peep't out of his first principles deserve the punishment of everlasting Death, and before he is partaker of the breath of life? How then can Mr. *Calvin* affirm that an unchangeable Decree of God appoints and seals men to eternal destruction? 'Tis strange that before men are guilty of  
any

any actual and personal sins, they should be so rigidly condemn'd to perpetual misery, which when they were not, could not merit the sadder judgment of Death; must they receive the Wages of Sin, who have never committed any? This is altogether inconsistent with the legal Process in common Courts of Judicature; and must man become more just and righteous than his Maker? And shall not the judge of all the World do right? *Gen. 18. 25.* Nay Mr. *Calvin* goes higher, which is fitter to be written in tears, than with Ink; for he says expressly in his third Book of his *Instit.* Chap. 24. Sect. 13. *Ecce, remedium adhibet, sed ne sanentur; lucem accendit, sed ut reddantur ceciores:* that is, that God proposeth a remedy for sins, but not that men should be healed of them; that God lighteth a light (perverting the proper use of it) that men may be made more blind. That he directs his voice to men in the Gospel, that they should grow deaf thereby. This assertion can never prove true in the first degrees and instances of mans Life, but when the Almighty does give men up to judicial blindness, and spiritual



occuration, when men obstinately re-  
 ject the propofals of mercy in the Gos-  
 pel; when fuch a fpirit of fatal delufi-  
 on feizes on them, and fo fully poffef-  
 fes them, then that fearful denuncia-  
 tion of judgment fhall fall on them,  
 as in the *Acts* 28. 26. Go (faith God)  
 unto this people, and fay, Hearing ye  
 fhall hear, and fhall not underftand;  
 and feeing ye fhall fee, and fhall not  
 perceive: and you have the reason  
 annexed in the following verfe, For  
 the heart of this people is waxed grofs;  
 and then the punifhment of their crime  
 infues, and their ears are dull of hear-  
 ing, and their eyes have they closed,  
 left they fhould fee with their eyes,  
 and hear with their ears, and fhould be  
 converted, and I fhould heal them: in  
 the 27. verfe. For the heart of this people  
 is waxed grofs, *emixurum id n regit in*  
*legi tibi. Dabit eis. Domine, scutum cordis,*  
*tyum dolorem:* that is, that their hearts  
 are grown fo brawny, and become fo  
 infenfible, that Gods mercies through  
 Chrift under the Gospel can make  
 no firm impreffion upon them; the  
 calloufnefs of their Confciencces, con-  
 tracted by habitual fin, does fupply  
 the place of a Shield, to defend and  
 repel

repel all the Darts, and Arrows, the menaces of Gods anger, and sharper displeasure that shall be emitted, or shot against them. As the fat of the *pericardium* enveloping and incircling the heart becomes fence against any attempt of the most predominant humours of the body, (this being *sanctum cordis*) ; so this fatal and wretched stupidity in sinning against the Almighty, does sometimes strongly guard the sinners heart against the incursions of the terrours of the Lord, and his sharper anger. Now this resolute perverseness causes the greatest grief to God, because mens tempers are so obdurate and impenetrable, that neither Oyl nor mercy, nor the suppleness of holy admonitions can insinuate it self and become operative on such a reprobate constitution of mind. Now then when men arrive to such an insensate and fatal obduration ; from such, God may justly withdraw his illuminating grace, and then such men may be wholly left in the dark and to themselves (which is the very *exultation* and height of Divine punishment). For when our unbridled nature  
is



is let loose, and gets the reins, into what desperate iniquities and precipitated actions will it quickly hurry us? Now indeed, in this manner a man may shut the gate of Gods mercy against himself, but the Lord does not do it to any; for he does not deny his grace to any man (wherein some make reprobation to consist) but only to such who so often, and so contemptuously abuse it.

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## CHAP.

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## CHAP. X.

10. **A**Nd now I shall proceed to shew that they that positively assert the Doctrine of absolute Election, destroy the very foundation of all Gods divine oeconomy, which is laid and firmly bottom'd on his unspeakable mercy, and that to the whole race of mankind: But some have arriv'd to so great a height of impudence, that they openly declare in the negative, and they take the liberty to speak of Decrees, and of the affairs and transactions of Heaven, as if they were Secretaries of State in that Kingdom, and so could open the *Arcana Imperii*, and fully reveal the secrets thereof; and that they are the favourites of Heaven, when all that they deliver is with so much peremptoriness, and  
as



as magisterially, as if they enjoy'd the place of an infallible Dictator ; too many drawing from these this unhappy conclusion, that some men are absolutely predestinated to eternal life through Christ ; so that seeing he hath done so much ( as they too confidently affirm ) for them, they need do the less, and that the great end of Christs death was to excuse us from a holy and a pious life, and that our Saviour did so deny his own Will, that we may take the liberty to use ours as we please ; and that he did bear the weight and heaviness of his Cross, that we might suffer none at all : and lastly, that the sharper scourges on Christs back will save the most profligate unrepenting sinner from the lash, and whip of eternal vengeance. Such principles as these are so destructive both of righteousness of life and of all Religion, and are so far from tending to the destruction of sin, that they plainly teach men the improvement of it ; and they make men no way more industrious, than to contrive the increase and growth of iniquity ; and to debauch even corruption

ruption and vice it self, when to our common humane natural pravity and wickedness we add studied impieties and artificial lewdness, new invented modes of sinning against God. And there hath not been wanting a Set of men in the world, (those great ingenio's for vice,) who have enhanst our innate and inbred corruptions to the greatest height; who have put their wits on the Tilters, and their souls on the Rack, and all to find out some new ways and arts to excel the most monstrous *Romans* themselves in their Acts and Scenes of horrid impieties and guilt: But can we entertain so ignoble a belief, that the eternal Son of God should suffer for any less end, than to meliorate the World? and to advance our humane nature to the greatest heights of piety, and to purity of life, and to raise our souls to the most refin'd and sublimated goodness? since Christ did come into the World, that sentence of eternal death might not be executed on us, in that he suffered, and fully satisfied the penalty of the Law, that we might be at liberty, but not become free to plead a perfect immunity and



and priviledge from our duty. So that  
**Christ** by his death purchasing the  
 remission of our sins, does not remit  
 his right, but rather confirms his title  
 and juster claim to our real obedience  
 and sanctity of life.

## CHAP.

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CHAP. XI.

**I** I shall in the next place shew you that from the beginning of Gods administration in the world, mankind could never pretend a freedom from his duty, and his reasonable service of God, in order to his future happiness: And I presume the serious consideration of this should quickly awaken and startle the most secure and absolute Predestinarian Dreamers; for God no sooner made man, but he did set him to the doing of his duty, which was co-eval, and did begin with the very Creation it self, which did take its original with ours; God indeed prescribing the same all along from the beginning: and that he might keep man, to whom he had indulg'd a whole world of blessings, in a constant conformity to himself, he did see it most necessary to this very end, to imprint in man a sense of his obedience, and that by the limitation and due



due boundary of his Free-will: so that the first Sabbath had been but the beginning of an eternal one to God, & the obliging man to a grateful acknowledgment of Gods wonderful mercy from a prospect of the whole Creation, (and that by a reflexive contemplation of the divine goodness in the glass or mirror of the Creature,) had not the Lord in his eternal prescience foreseen the sad consequence of the Creation in the Fall of man by disobedience, in the unhappy abuse of his Free-will: and upon this account, God restrains man from the use of the fruit of one single Tree in Paradise, which limitation was set him, still to preserve him under real duty, and all that he might own the supremacy of his Creator above him, by this treaty, or solemn piece of homage to God, (as Sovereign Lord, and grand proprietor to all.) Thus you see the Creator was own'd in the very beginning of the world by duty and obedience, and that in reference to mans eternal felicity, as having an immediate aspect towards it, and certainly every mans obedience is no less required under the Gospel, and to perswade men into a full belief of this, I might easily trace the line

line of the service of God from the very first Book of *Moses* to the end of the Prophets, down to the Gospel times; for you may see in the infancy of the world, the great Creator was own'd in the creatures natural Religion, in the reasonable service of Sacrifice, when righteous *Abel* offer'd up the firstlings of his flock; and afterward indeed himself, being Gods Proto-Martyr, and so supplying the place of the Sacrifice, as well as performing the duty of the Priest: And he is become *juge Sacrificium*; for he being dead, yet speaks forth our duty, and due submission to the will of God, and therefore you read in *Gen. 4. vers. 4, 5.* That the Lord had respect to *Abel*, and to his offering; but unto *Cain* and his offering he had none at all. But some from this very place of Scripture imagine, and as vainly phantasie, that *Cain* was concluded in the black line of positive reprobation: so that from hence as from a firm Hypothesis, some bold and blasphemous suggesters have inferr'd as absolute election, with its contrary of as positive reprobation; yet some *Sublapsarians* have acknowledg'd Gods



Decree in some measure respective in this present case, in the intuition of *Cain's* sin: though others will allow *Cain* to be reprobated only in respect of original sin, and not of his actual personal iniquity; the one being contracted from the loins of his Parents, and the other willfully committed by himself; which by consequence he might have avoided, and so hinder'd, as being a free and voluntary Agent. But certainly there could not be any reprobation of *Cain* upon the bare prospect of that sin, which was committed by his Parents before his birth and being; for this would be to make God to see, and not to see; to behold the one, and to connive and so neglect the sight of the horrible murder of his Brother: whereas both sins are the joint object of Gods infinite prescience. But now if you please to consider Gods mild and candid reprehension of *Cain*, in the 7. vers. of the 4. chap. of Gen. *If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?* (that is) If thou dost exceed, or excel in duty, thou shalt then assuredly receive a Crown or Blessing; I say 'tis clear from Gods plain argumentation, that *Cain* had as free a will to offer

offer up as reasonable and as acceptable a Sacrifice as *Abel* did, if Gods spirit could by Faith in *Christum venturum*, in Christ to come (in the first prophecy of grace and mercy by Christ) have wrought in him as holy, and as upright, and as charitable a heart, as the spirit of God had done in his brother. But the Lord who is *επισκοπος*, the great discerner of all mens hearts, did clearly see in these two Brothers different principles and ends in performing the same ordinance of sacrifice: For the one by the instinct of nature, and the help of divine grace; & the other indeed by the meer dictate of nature, did lay the foundation of the worship of God in this way of sacrifice. As for *Cain* he did really doat on the *opus operatum*, or did only rest in the sacrifice being offer'd, when the genuine and proper effect of sacrifice was to raise mens hearts from dead works to serve the living God; He served the Lord only for himself, for meer temporal ends, and advantages; when on the other hand the Almighty did see that *Abel* offer'd himself in the spirit of sacrifice, as well



as in the letter of carnal worship ; and all was for spiritual and temporal blessings : So that the one offer'd up a sacrifice of covetousness for himself without God ; the other made a ready offertory of thankfulness for the union of himself with God: and upon this very account the Lord is said to accept or elect the one, and consequently to reject or reprobate the other ; the sacrifice of *Cain* being turn'd into sin, that of his Brothers into an improvement in grace ; the one you read did unhappily beget the cruelty of envy and Fratricide, the other a sincere love of God and a ready Martyrdom. So that the evidence of righteous *Abel's* grace in the Almighty's acceptation of it, was not the effect of absolute election, but a demonstration of his real faith; neither was the declaration of *Cains* curse in Gods rejection of him, the real product of irrelative reprobation, but meerly the result of his outward formal profession, and inward corruption, so that *è quovis ligno non fit Mercurius*, tho' the Carver be a *Polycletus*, or the greatest Artist. Now this natural religion by sacrifice God was pleas'd to vindicate  
and

and sanctifie for his own peculiar worship, as you may read all along in the first five Books of *Moses*, where he does prescribe and give directive Laws to the *Jews* for the same: For God would never suffer his people to become lazie or secure, but still he shew'd them in the Old Testament the necessity of their own endeavours in respect of their future blifs, and all in a way of service and obedience, which our great Patrons of unconditionate Predestination do utterly deny, and as scornfully reject. Thus you see the creature did hold a constant conformity with his Creator in the primitive state of perfection, which did consist in his natural worship of God by sacrifice: so that man at first did truly resemble a well set Watch, where all the subordinate and inferiour wheels do hold an exact correspondence with the *primum mobile*, or main spring (the analogous Soul of motion) But being disorder'd by a fall, or some such extraneous accident, the same cannot be restor'd, but by the hand of the skilful Watch-maker in some special action: In like manner in the Fall of Man, in his breaking the first tye of Obedience,

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mans



mans irregular motion and life did ravel it self forth into universal disorder and disobedience ; and then the first way of mans acting in Gods service was disturb'd , and utterly broken off by the sad Fall of humane nature : yet after the Lapse , mankind was clearly convinc'd of their duty by the very light of nature (though indeed clouded by the Devils delusions) whence he was very sollicitous, and did earnestly endeavour for an expiation of his obliquities and wandrings from the Law of Nature written in his heart, and plainly pointed out by the dictates of Conscience ; by the help of which expiation, to use the expression of the Prophet *Isaiah, chap. 40. vers. 4* Man did strive to make the crooked streight, and the rough places plain, that he might go on evenly in the way of true worship and duty towards God, (though it must be confest that all these helps were too infirm to patch up the defects of our lapsed nature). Now this conclusion being made and granted, wretched man resolves to make experiment, whether there be any thing in his power and dominion, which God hath given him, that would

would stand in his room between God and him, and so bear the judgment due unto himself. This resolution being fixt, and fully made, poor man endeavours to find out what will bear the most proportion to his worth, and all to this end, that the same may become a reasonable expiation : and upon this account it was that he did attempt to make a plenary satisfaction by the offering the best Creature he had; *solent molâ salsâ litare, qui non habent thura*; they did offer up a salt cake when they could not entertain their Deities with Odours, Myrrh and Frankincense: and so we still find and read that reasonable nature directed its eye to an expiation by something living, especially of the very best in his possession, as evidently appears by righteous *Abel*, whose practice did then become a precedent to all mankind (as being then the most reasonable and readiest way of reconciling the Almighty to man again;) the which as the Lord did accept, so he did afterward by especial Revelation command this manner of worship by Sacrifice, and that of the best living Creature, or inanimate one that was within the sphere of a mans



calling. So that you may fully see that under the Mosaical oeconomy, God did lay his commands on the *Jews* to offer up Sacrifice, still to perpetuate their Duty ; and though the ceremonial Law was not intended to be of constant obligation, yet it was transform'd into that which was lasting and durable under the Gospel, in the just intentions of duty : For in the whole body of the Jewish worship under the Old Testament there were some veins of an intimation of a spiritual one under the New ; for all the sacrifices under the Law were but figures of a sublimer and purer service of God under the Gospel ; they were all but as so many steps, or convenient ascents for their weak and infirm apprehensions to climb or rise up by to the true knowledge of spiritual worship. So that lastly, the *Jews*, though they were heirs of all, yet continuing children, and being in their minority, must in this manner spell out Religion, since the Almighty did mildly insinuate it by the discipline of sense. Thus God did instruct the *Jews* in their nonage, and under the guardianship of the Law (being under these ele-

elements and rudiments of the world )  
as in *Gal. chap. 4. vers. 1, [2, 3, 4.*  
Now for a farther illustration of this,  
I might go down to *Abrahams* Al-  
tar, to *Moses* his Tabernacle, and  
so to *Solomons* Temple, till I come  
to Christs Church, till I have brought  
you to the true light, that lighteth eve-  
ry one that cometh into the world, even  
our blessed Saviour himself, who  
was that true Sacrifice of Sacri-  
fices, ever flaming on the Altar of  
Gods love, and so making a suffici-  
ent atonement both for *Jew* and *Gen-  
tile*. The whole design of all was  
plainly thus, Almighty God was  
pleased in the Primitive Creation to  
indulge to man a world of blessings,  
the whole stock of his Creatures in  
*usumfructum* to trade with all: man  
by his disobedience did become Bank-  
rupt of the Divine bounty; yet God  
out of the tenderness of his mercy  
deeply compassionating mans mise-  
ry, enter'd with us into a Cove-  
nant of Redemption, freely giving his  
only Son and Heir to satisfy the  
whole Debt, whereby we as Out-law'd  
were by Christs abundant satisfacti-  
on restored again into the liberty of  
the



the Sons of God, and made to stand *recti in curiâ* at the Tribunal of Gods justice, as Co-heirs with Christ by his purchase of redemption, as in *Rom. chap. 8. vers. 17. And if children, then Heirs, Heirs of God, and joynt-heirs with Christ.*

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## CHAP.

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C H A P. XII.

12. **N**OW some men have presumed to go higher, and as confidently do affirm, That the very Heathens, who do not enjoy the means of divine Grace and Goodness through Christ, do however arrive at happiness, by living up to the very Light of Nature; that is, such as are not partakers of the effectual prevailing means of Grace under the Gospel, and that by hearing the divine Word, and so as readily receiving the glad tidings of salvation through our blessed Saviour. In *Rom. 2. 14, 15.* we read that *the Gentiles which have not the Law, do by nature the things contained in the Law, these having not the Law* (that is, that which was given to *Mos. s* in two Tables of Stone:) for they enjoyed only a small abridgement of it, a certain Breviary or Epitome of the same; yet it was deeply imprinted in their hearts, which they did copy out in their lives, which  
were



were the clearest transcripts of it. These Gentiles *were a Law unto themselves*: For conscience in all Heathens as well as Christians, supplied the place of one; for it did execute its particular and immediate office in the little Consistory of the soul, since it plainly does accuse, or directly excuse for the careless neglect of duty: and truly, such persons as have strictly observed the express dictates of Gods Holy Spirit, in living according to a well advised conscience, are such as by *Justin Martyr* are called *βιωβωτες μετὰ λόγου*: not that that place in this Father does admit of the interpretation of our Saviours being the *Word*, or being the divine λόγος or *reason*, as Christ truly is said to be the substantial or essential Word of God, *John 1.1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*, which was incarnate on earth; If this exposition is allowed of, then the difficulty and doubt concerning the future condition of the Heathens in reference to their eternal safety ceases, and as soon disappears; but here it may be probably conjectured, that such persons as have been only directed by the glimmering light of nature,

nature, such I say have made a greater progress, and a readier proficiency in some religious duties, than many Christians have done, that live under the brighter Sun-shine of the Gospel. And I perswade my self, that such mens hearts being melted into a tenderness by the gentler flame of nature, have been readier to receive greater impressions of piety and devotion, than many obdurate tempers of men continuing under the light of the Gospel. Indeed the very Heathens have been fully convinced of the great necessity of their duty towards God, from the force and power of natural conscience, that being the true and infallible Judge of mens actions since the sadder Fall of man. For our humane understandings do still stand seiz'd of, and are fully possess'd of the first principles of knowledge, all which are deriv'd by right of inheritance from nature it self, as the *νομοὶ ἐννοεῖται*, those common notions, which as soon as they appear, do seem to be enstamp'd and imprinted on our rational nature; as namely, that God is to be worshipt; that men should do as they would be done to; that all should honour their  
Parents,



Parents, and the like : these are Aphorisms and duties written in the very Book of Nature : for the Heathens do suck in these connatural truths with their milk, and do draw their duty towards God & men, from the very breasts of Nature : and though it is a great Question in the Schools, Whether a Heathen walking by the meer light of Nature ( which the Almighty hath set up in his soul ) may become truly capable of salvation thereby ; I presume upon the most rational grounds, it must be resolv'd in the Negative ; and that eternal salvation is only attainable, and becomes feasible, by a full belief, and a real faith in our Saviours plenary satisfaction and merits. For, pray how can the Heathens admit of a belief of the infinite efficacy of our Saviours sufferings, who did never hear the plain report of it ? since faith is the proper and genuine effect of hearing, as in *Rom. 10. 17.* where 'tis expressly affirmed, *that faith comes, and is introduc'd by hearing, and hearing by the word of God ?* However 'tis certain, that the obscure Heathen had some glimpse and imperfect discoveries of Christ. And truly this opinion carries the

the face of probability along with it, infomuch as *Homer's* Fable may admit of a true Moral : for the light of some truths may, and do appear, and do commonly shine forth through Poetical mists and clouds ; for he affirms, That the old age did see a long chain hanging down from Heaven to Earth ; so that the Heathen World did perceive some links of this chain of Divine mercy and goodness reaching down even to their times, and firmly to re-unite the creature to the great Creator ; which only could be effected by the incarnation of the Son of God, this Angel of the Covenant, descending as on *Jacob's* Ladder, from Heaven to Earth ; so that in the benighted age of the World , there may be some glimmerings of the light of this sacred truth of Christs birth discovered, and some faint rayes of our Saviours coming into the World scattered abroad ; which more illustriously appeared in the *Sibylls* sacred raptures : for we may find some of them to be more like a Christian Comment ( as being altogether Evangelical ) than the blind Heathens bare Predictions ; as it clearly appears from that of *Sibylla*

*Cumæa*



*Cumæa* and divers other, this *Virgil* does record,

*Jam nova progenies cœla demittitur alto,  
Chara Deūm Soboles* —————

Now the great God is descended from his royal heavenly Palace to his footstool here on earth, to dwell in this lower region of flesh. Thus these *Sibylls* did seem to transcribe Gospel Text, as that of *S. John, Chap. I. 14. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us*: so that it seem'd by an easie labour of translation, not only to derive this so great a truth, but the sacred Scriptures eloquence too. Hence you may easily perceive, that the Heathens did enjoy in some measure the Doctrine of Christs Mission and Advent into the World: they had this truth as Gold in the Ore, and there was only wanting some skilful Artist to refine it, and thus to illustrate the right and proper use of it. And now upon this and several other accounts, I presume we may safely entertain a belief, that there are other sheep, which are not of Christs visible fold, which notwithstanding belong to the same Shepherd;

herd; and so may be truly said to be in Christ, and *reatus Christiani*, though not *nomine*, and by meer appellation; and many such there are, who do feel in their souls a Law of Grace warring with their rebellious lusts in their members and gradually prevailing and bringing them to a due conformity to the will of God, who though they may not have the Evangelical Law in the preaching of the Gospel, yet truly become one to themselves; and so performing in their proportionable manner Gospel obedience; forasmuch as they do strictly observe the dictates of Gods holy Spirit, in living according to a truly well informed Conscience. Now such as these, both were and are many of those Gentiles, who perfectly abhorring Idolatrous Religion, and scorning the superstitious Rites of their Idols vainer worship, have endeavoured to bring themselves to the true spiritual worship of God, and so did endeavour to live as exactly as they possibly could in the exercise of all Moral duties. And I presume, it cannot justly be denied, that there were many such, that did dwell under the Law,  
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and some that are now in these Gospel dayes, who though they are not under the blessed sound of the Gospel *in terminis*, yet like the Eunuch of *Candace*, would be Christians *nomine* too, if they had a *Philip* or a *S. Paul* to instruct them in the right manner of Christian Religion; and surely the Almighty will never require any more of any, than he hath given them; for *he is no respecter of persons*, (which the Doctrine of positive Predestination does absolutely imply) *but whosoever does righteousness, the same is accepted of God*; as in *Acts 10. 34, 35.* Then Peter opened his mouth and said, *Of a truth I perceive, that God is no acceptor of persons; but in every Nation, he that feareth him, and so worketh righteousness, (δεξιός αὐτοῦ ἐστίν) becomes truly acceptable to him; and then certainly such are so, who by their obedience to the light of the Law of Nature, shall in their conversation justify their sincere endeavour to hold the exactest conformity with God in real duty: for, if men should be so strangely unreasonable, and as highly uncharitable, as to exclude men from all interest in Christ, but only those who are visible Professors of the true Orthodox Faith;*

Faith ; then there would be no room in Christs fold for those persons mentioned in *S. Mark* 9.38,39. for our Saviour would not have that man in the least wise forbid to follow him, who did work Miracles in his name, even to the casting forth of Devils : and though he did not become a follower of Christ and his Apostles ; yet it is plainly evident, that Christ did then in an implicit manner admit and adopt him, by his ready affirmation to the Disciples, saying, *That he that is not against us, must certainly be on our part* ; and so stand up in a joint vindication of us and our Doctrine. And now, which is farther considerable, and may be safely enquired into without the least curiosity, pray what shall become of all essential Christians, who did only live *μετὰ λόγῳ*, by the regular suggestions of reason, and the convincing power thereof, in the assiduous practice of their duties ? and what shall we affirm of such men, whose weak capacities, from the perswasion of false Guides, have, and do betray them to persecute Christ, out of an erroneous zeal, some vainly imagining in this very manner to stand up and



defend him? And lastly, What shall we conclude of all those numerous Sects, which not out of meer peevishness, or from a prospect of temporal advantage, but only out of puny error in judgement, have unhappily mistaken the truth; which however they do from the greatest sincerity love, and as willingly embrace, and as evidently profess in the tenour of their lives? this being the infallible note, and the true *relièver* of saving Grace.

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CHAP.

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C H A P. XIII.

13. **N**OW if all of these fore-mentioned sorts of men, with divers others, should be excluded by any absolute act of reprobation, this would make our blessed Saviour's *pauillus grex*, his little flock so small, that it would be really no more in proportion to mankind, ( pardon, Sir, the comparison ) than a few Olives, or that little fruit which is casually left, and remains on the Tree after it is beaten : and pray then , where would be Gods infinite goodness, which the *Psalmist* does so highly advance above all his works, when such a vast proportion of them is really designed by a fatal Decree, for the glorifying of his divine Justice, which is indeed peculiarly assign'd and allotted to the exaltation of his incomprehensible mercy ? But here, if one shall by way of analogy, duly consider of individual men, with the Almighty's gracious ends in



the glorifying the great Attributes of his Mercy and Justice in their salvation, or eternal ruine; I shall only propound to such a Proportionist, the number of the seventy persons of the family of the Patriarch *Jacob*, which went down into *Egypt*, which indeed, and that in a corner of the Countrey, did multiply themselves in the space of four hundred years into six hundred thousand men (besides women and children) as was evident at their departure out of *Egypt*: I say, let such a one compute, and make a full enumeration of the increase of this one peculiar family in the two potent Kingdoms of *Judah* and *Israel*, and he may easily see and collect from this, that the number of true Christians is not so small as the Predestinarian Accountants, and as vain surmisers do give it in: for *ex pede Herculem*; so that then from this little Toe of the *Colossus* of mankind, we may in some measure safely proportion, and make an easie conjecture of the whole body thereof: and as there are many Stars in the Firmament of Nature, so there are in that of Christs Church; and there are divers degrees of Grace corresponding

dent to the several degrees of Glory therein : and in the Sphere of Christs Church there are some of those Stars *occulta & nebuloſe*, and of them that do viſibly ſhine, their different magnitudes make them more or leſs glorious. And here, if I may preſume to make a parallel, the moſt regular Chriſtians that do make a right uſe of the Sacraments ( of thoſe Seals annex, and appendant to the Covenant of Gods Grace ) may very fitly reſemble the Stars of the firſt magnitude , whoſe brighter glory makes them the moſt illuſtrious lights of their own truth and perfection. And as for thoſe of meaner attainments , and of leſs ſtrict and regular lives , thoſe may be reputed Stars of the fifth, ſixth, or ( ſuppoſe ) ſixtieth magnitude : all of which I ſhall leave to the infinitely wiſe Creator's all-ſeeing eye, who eaſieſt does diſcern, and as fully know, who are truly his : And for thoſe many Comets and ſtrange Meteors that ariſe in the Sphere of the Church , that make ſuch great and portentous blazes, ( like *Nauplius's* fire ) they will clearly ſhew what they are in the leaſt ebbing of Religion , or in



the seeming shipwrack of the visible Church of God. But here some of Mr. Calvin's Disciples may stand up, and resolutely appear to stop us with an inhibition, telling us, that we must not too boldly enquire, or proceed to make a farther search into the causes of Gods pretended absolute Decrees; for they do positively alledge, that they are such as disdain our reach, or the nearer approach of our reason; and that they are an Abyſſe not to be fathom'd by our weak and shallow capacities: so that we should not pry too busily into the Ark of God; but should rather acquiesce in a modest knowledge of this, as of all other divine Myſteries, which stands constantly admiring, whilst a proud apprehension of Gods secrets, staggers, and, at the same time, stumbles too. For, what eye that looks on the Sun, does not dazle? *Ye men of Galilee, why gaze ye then into Heaven?* To all this I plainly answer, and as freely confess, that some Myſteries of our Christian Religion do triumph over our weak reason, and do conquer it in the very attempt of apprehending them; as namely, the very abstruse Doctrine of  
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the Incarnation of our blessed Saviour, and the manner of it, (which is as mysterious, as his person is glorious, and as the mercy of it is incomprehensible :) But why may we not discover, and as fully behold and see the evident causes of mans ruine and damnation founded, and that only in the corrupted nature of mankind ; rather than to search, and that altogether in vain, for a strange and an unknown cause in the absolute necessitating Predestination of the Almighty ? 'Tis strange that Christians now should delight themselves in this Stoical dream, That all things must run in a necessary and unavoidable current of Gods eternal Decrees : I am sure 'tis a perfect contradiction in nature, to affirm, that there is a necessitated choice: for though it must be granted, that God does truly and necessarily foresee, that such a thing will be done, or such a sin will be committed ; yet the Almighty cannot be said in any respect to know that what is acted voluntarily, must be done necessarily. For he perfectly discovers by his divine Prescience, as through a Perspective-glass, every mans voluntary motion, so that it might have



have fallen out otherwise : every smatterer in Logick, or any one that hath the least insight into Metaphysics, can soon make a ready distinction between a natural and a voluntary agent, between such as act by the prescrib'd or fix'd Laws of Nature, and of rational creatures which are in an equal possibility of acting or not acting ; for that the divine Decrees do not impose any real fatal necessity on any, in respect of their eternal safety or ruine ; for the voice of reason must needs proclaim those Laws and Constitutions very unjust, which plainly forbid and prohibit that which a man cannot possibly shun or avoid ; all consultation then must be vain, and consideration ineffectual, if all things must be resolv'd into what is only necessary or impossible. Things then can be no more chang'd by our most earnest endeavours, than we can stay the course of the Heavens, and of Celestial Bodies with our little finger, or add a cubit to our present stature : So that if you will admit of a middle way between what is said to be impossible, and what is truly necessary, by the interposition of voluntary actions and agents,

agents, who fully enjoy a liberty to move or not to move, then most of the Phænomenas and difficulties in this great point of Predestination, may be easily resolv'd. But now if all things shall fall out and come to pass by an inevitable necessity, then *Sisyphus* might devolve his crime on cruel Fate, and *Tantalus* might justly accuse the severer Gods for his fault revert in his punishment; for they are both brought in by the Poet plainly confessing *πῆνι ἀνάγκη ἀρύκτω καχελευμένοι*; so that what they did unjustly perpetrate, they do as readily complain, that they were compelled to it by an ineluctable necessity, *ὅπῃ ἡ μοῖρα πάντων αἰτία*, even by the over-ruling Mandates of their Gods: and so *Homer* introduces one crying out in the same tragical note in his nineteenth *Iliad*,

— ἐγὼ δ' ἐκ αἰεὶός εἰμι,  
 ἢ μά' ἕως, καὶ μοῖρα, καὶ ἡεροφοῖτις εἰννύς.

(that is) That I am no way criminal, but by the violent impulses of the divine Powers.



## CHAP. XIV.

14. **N**ow you may plainly discover that this absolute Predestinarian assertion is but the opinion of impelling fate reviv'd, and the undoubted transcript of the Heathen Philosophy, and then it should never be admitted into the Articles of the true Christian belief; for certainly there never did pass any positive Decree in the Court of Heaven for the commission of any sin, God did not put weapons into our hands to wound and destroy our selves withall; no, all sinners are most barbarously cruel to themselves; they become their own Assassins, sole contributors to their own ruin, so that none can without doing violence to their own reason, and their Religion, assign the Divine Decrees the proper cause of mans destruction: for there cannot be two total and adequate causes of the same Numerical effect; hence you may admire

mire how some most daring Hereticks can proclaim this so dangerous and horrible a Doctrine, That the Almighty does absolutely will our eternal misery : For thereby these men will be fore'd to a concession, that God does fully assent to the sin, which is the sole and genuine principle of mans Damnation ; this blasphemous Tenet is inconsistent with the pure nature of the most righteous God ; for 'tis certain that the creature might fall (*no-lente Dea*) and without any determinate purpose of the Lords (his Divine pre-science not being excluded). Neither does this necessitate the particular actions of men, for the Divine prevision is not the immediate Origin of events ; for Gods bare fore knowledge of the futurity of things, that they will be done, can never be assum'd as any cogent argument to evince, that such things are effected, because he foresees them, though Mr. *Twiss* in his *Scientiâ media* hath found out a strange intentional one in *Mente Divinâ*, in the Divine intellect. And then it must be as frankly acknowledg'd, that though God doth really foresee, that some men will go and run into destru-



destruction ; yet it cannot be so as Mr. *Calvin* affirms in the third Book and 24. *Chap.* of his *Institutions* , because God so willeth it, when it is the proper result of our own depraved wills , not of the Divine one ; otherwise he must of necessity make Almighty God the Author of sin : and so upon this account Mr. *Calvin* proceeds very confidently to tell his disciples, and others, it is not their part to ask a reason of such Decrees ; therefore we should be hushd and quieted as meer children with a contented ignorance : But certainly this wretched opinion of Gods positive reprobation does not carry the nature of Divine mysteries along with it ; it is not accompany'd with so great an awe and Majesty, as if it should be only obey'd, and no way disputed ; and fully assented to, and no way argued, or in the leastwise encountred : for God himself does absolutely deny that it is by any Ordinance or Decree of his, that the wicked do perish ; for he makes a solemn and open proclamation against it in the Prophet *Ezechiel* (*chap.* 33 11. ) *Say unto them, as I live, saith the Lord, &c.* so that we may infallibly

bly believe the truth of this, when we have the accession of Gods Oath to confirm and strengthen it. *For I have no pleasure (saith God) in the death of the wicked,* ἡ βύλομαι τὸν θάνατον τοῦ ἀσεβῆς, that is, I have no kind of will or intention for it; but now in this Sacred Scripture we have the express asseveration of the Almighty, that he hath no other will at all, but that the wicked would turn from their evil and unrighteous ways and live; *turn ye, turn ye,* which is repeated with the most vehement and ingeminated affection of mind and desire; *for why will ye die, ye House Israel?* hence you may clearly perceive that we carry the principles of ruin within us; and that it is not effected by the force of any peremptory Decree without us, *O Israel, thy destruction is of thy self,* *Hes. 13. 9.* For the Divine Decree being an immanent act, it does not therefore produce any real effect *ad extra*; 'tis very obvious to any mans capacity in that known instance, that a Law being made, and provided against any crime, as of Felony, or any other, it no way enforceth any man to the commission of it, it directly tends to



a far better end, for it becomes a fence and fortification against it : But now, if God by an absolute act of Predestination hath laid an equal necessity on man, that he shall infallibly suffer Damnation, what can poor impotent and infirm man do ? Can he wrestle with Omnipotence, or in the leastwise oppose such positive determinations ? Therefore the Lord might, if he would, (as Mr. *Calvin* tells us in his third Book of his *Inst.* 23. chap.) have provided a remedy for these sad Maladies and Evils that he foresaw ; but he goes on affirming that God otherwise decreed : and he farther says, that God did not make any provision in this kind, therefore of his determinate purpose he hath created poor mortals to perpetual misery & inevitable destruction. Truly this is so desperate and so destructive a position, as must of necessity argue a presumptuous & daring Pride, as well as the want of right reason in any man, who shall confidently attempt by such unwarrantable and groundless censures to set and prescribe bounds and limits to Gods infinite wisdom, (acting in the free emanations of his goodness towards

wards all mankind,) which it is really impossible a finite creature can fully comprehend; since you read that neither the footsteps of Gods judgments, nor of his mercy can be traced, *Rom. 11. 33. How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!*

for the Image of God, which indeed must be understood of the intellectual part of man, his reasonable soul in all the actions of the understanding, and those of the Will it self, (wherein liberty does consist;) for from the autonomy of a mans body, and by an

on man can easily discover that man is no more than the most Vegetable, or in-  
fused the best itself; but man was cre-

CHAP.  
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in his own nature, that he needed not  
any thing that might contribute to his

be supplied in himself: to that man  
of the Temper, and of himself  
was no the pushing or exciting of  
the seeds of corruption, latent or



words all mankind, which it is not  
 ly impossible a finite creature can

ly comprehended; since you read that  
 neither the thoughts of Gods judges

mean, nor his heart can be searched  
 Rom. 11. 33. How unsearchable are his

## CHAP. XV.

1. **T**HUS you see that I have proved  
 at large, that man was made af-  
 ter the Image of God, which indeed  
 must be understood of the intellectual  
 part of man, his reasonable Soul in all  
 the actings of the understanding, and  
 those of the Will it self, ( wherein  
 its liberty does consist: ) for from the  
 Anatomy of a mans body, and by an  
 exact disquisition of his temperament,  
 we can easily discover that man is no  
 more than the finest Vegetable, or in-  
 deed the best Beast; but man was crea-  
 ted in the state of integrity and perfe-  
 ction, and of full grown reason; for he  
 was at first in such a perfect condition  
 in his own nature, that he needed not  
 any thing that might contribute to his  
 happiness, since that Paradise seem'd to  
 be impaled in himself: so that mans  
 Fall afterwards by the subtle suggesti-  
 on of the Tempter, and of himself,  
 was not the quickning or exciting of  
 any seeds of corruption, latent or  
 lying

lying hid in mans nature, but the cruel operation and act of an higher Essence or Superior Being, even of the Devil himself, on and upon poor man (he being of a lower and inferior Order :) for Satan and his wicked Angels being irrecoverably lapt and lost, and that by endeavouring to make War with their Creator for supremacy, and eminency of power, (that being the most natural and immediate cause of all Rebellion) the Apostate Devil did too quickly draw mankind into the same condemnation, he having a great and mighty influence on men, much like that of the greater wheels of a Clock moving the lesser ones; for the Devils being first fallen from their original integrity, did as soon move very irregularly; insomuch that they did by the methods of flattery, and insinuating arts, win and prevail on our first Parents, to the like irregularity with themselves. How did the Devil lie prostrate at those very feet he was undermining, thus strangely deluding them with their capacity and power of treading on him, and that they should at length be both advanc'd, and so become, and start up



Gods, and they themselves become the proper objects of Adoration and worship: Now our first Parents could not trace the windings of this old Serpent, when he did so dazle their eyes with the excessive splendour of that pretended glory, (of being like Gods) and all that they might not by the glimmering light of this false disguise perceive how near they were approaching to the fate of Devils. And here the Serpents language was not so sweet and charming, as it was truly powerful and prevailing; for where he gains no conquest by perswasion, he does closely undermine by flattery: so that by the enchantments of a serpentine tongue, the duty of not eating (in which single instance their Obedience to God did consist) is altogether dissuaded and diverted from; and our first Parents being tickled with the fancy of being Deities, at last applaud the design of disobedience, and entertain the novelty of contemning the power of the great Legislator or Lawgiver. And now you may see that the same kind of sin, was the cause of the Fall both of Angels, and of men; which truly in both was

was a prodigious pride, a phantastick desire, and itch after novelty in a vain presumption of a better Estate; yet man was perfect enough in his own primitive nature, and that for a regular and orderly motion in his own sphere of duty towards God, as you may plainly perceive, till the Devil tempted man with the same alluring bait, by the same sin that insnared him; and so poor man was afterward betray'd into the same pit-fall of ruin with the Apostate Angels. Thus sin in this manner becoming the sad disease of the soul, can no way be charg'd on Nature, neither on the God of nature; it must then necessarily proceed *ab alio à Creatore*, from another distant from the Creator, and that must by an undeniable consequence be from the Creature it self. And so a good Father does expressly tell us, *causam peccati constat esse malam voluntatem Diaboli, & hominis se à Deo avertentem; quæ vero malitia voluntatis, non à Deo, sed ex Diabolo & nobis esse proveniat.* But now how could man being created perfect, lose this natural perfection in himself? For as the Royal Preacher tells us, *Eccles. 7. 29.*



God made man perfect, but he hath sought out many ways and inventions, and all to become a *felo de se*, his own Executioner, an undoer of himself. Now the manner how this was fatally effected, is a proper theme and subject of a more curious enquiry: for we may still discern the fundamental goodness in the image of God, in the excellent frame and fabrick of man, (though now much broken and deform'd) as in a curious and beautiful picture (though casually defac'd) we may easily discover the excellency of the Limner in the perfection, and rare symmetry of the piece; so that as we must be thought very unreasonable to charge the blame of its deformation on the Artist, whose skill is so eminent, glorious, and perspicuous in the Picture (for in blurr'd lineaments the excellent proportion may be readily perceiv'd,) no more truly can we justly charge the Almighty for defacing that most divine image he made of himself, for blotting the same with sin; we must therefore seek farther for the source and origine of this imperfection, or desperate contagion, which hath so much

corrupted the creature in the very Creature, for that this infection is universal, and so generally spreads it self through the whole mass of mankind, is a doctrine truly most easily to be believ'd, and as fully to be assented to, since we clearly see the poyson and infection of one part, will easily creep, and so insinuate and propagate it self through the whole body : and now if after all our most subtle disquisitions we shall not so happily find the spring of this bitter water of sin and pollution, since we have and taste the sadder effects of it, we have not the least reason utterly to deny it, no more than we have to affirm that the River *Nilus* hath no heads, because we cannot discover them, (for the original thereof lying deep, and being interwoven with the veins of the Earth, they baffle mens most curious inquiry) or to imagine that the seminifick nature of weeds is not in a garden, because it is so hidden and complicated with the earth, that we cannot find it in the mould thereof. For I see not the least reason why the creature should give a full and satisfactory account of the Fall of mankind, so that we ought ra-



ther to acquiesce and content our selves, (that though sin like the River *Nilus* does run far, yet it does at last lose it self in the Ocean of Gods infinite mercy,) the effects of mans Sin and Fall being good (though the cause was truly and infallibly bad :) And if we may ascend one step higher, and so presume to make a little inquiry into the Fall of Angels, (for that of poor weak mans did follow on theirs, as I have before sufficiently declared) I do not see, but why with judicious Mr. *Hooker* we may reasonably believe that Creatures that are of a finite and gradual perfection did by a reflexive admiration of their own worth, mount and fly above their own station, upon the wings of an ambitious desire to ennoble their natures, though they did thereby dishonour their great Creator, and that by a scornful contempt of what they enjoy'd, and as vain an attempt of aspiring after more, upon which very account they did justly deserve to be, and so were utterly and eternally degraded, and so like lightning were violently cast down from Heaven into the Regions of eternal misery and darkness; *Jude v. 6.*

And

And the Angels which kept not their first state, *οὐκ τηροῦντες τὴν ἑαυτῶν ἀρχήν*, that is, not observing or not keeping their own distinct principality, (independent upon any but God himself) but leaving their own habitations, like prisoners they were fast bound in misery, where their fatal captivity is altogether irreversible, God having reserved them in everlasting Chains under his Divine judgement, in the Dungeon of eternal horroure and darkness, unto the last and great day of Assize; when God will on the evil Angels inflict the same punishment, that Politicians do on the bodies of Traytors, rack them into a confession of their most daring sin, and Gyant-like provocation, by their desperate attempts of invading Heaven it self. And now here also that is a very unsafe and dangerous opinion of Mr. Calvin, who asserts that Gods reprobation was the cause of the Angels Defection from him; for then their horrid Apostasie must be wholly devolved upon the Almighty (which must surely be an argument of the highest blasphemy to affirm) But we may easily assign a more immediate, and



and proper cause of the Rebellion of the fallen Angels, which did set the Almighty upon a defensive War against them, which was from that complex and complicated sin of pride in them, which seldom goes alone, but is attended with a most large troop of other impieties, whose joynt and accumulated strength did subdue and conquer a more numerous legion of Angels, as 'tis expressly affirm'd in 1 *Tim.* 3. 6. where *S. Paul* does seriously admonish young *Timothy* not to become a Novice, *in rebus*, as one newly set in fertile ground, (being transplanted into the enclosure of the Church) lest being lifted or puff'd up, and so become intoxicated with spiritual pride, he thereby find the ruinous effects of that, and that by stumbling and so falling into the condemnation or fatal judgment of the Devils: Pride indeed is a sin very familiar with us (and is many times the principal, if not the sole ground not only of the rebellion of the Apostate spirits, but of all intestine Wars and inbred Divisions among men :) and is a sin of so prolifick a nature, that it may by a very reasonable

ble conjecture be concluded, that our original transgression must be the Spawn of that first Diabolical sin, it being a most natural demonstration to prove the cause by the sadder effect of it.

## CHAPTER.



## C H A P. XVI.

16. **B**Ut here vain curiosity may seem to suggest an enquiry into the time of the Creation of Angels, and their consequent Lapse and fall. I must confess I am very unwilling to gratifie this inquisitive humour, neither can I pretend to cure this sad itch after novelty in Divinity, as well as in other faculties, and abstruse Sciences; yet I presume the Creation of Angels may be safely antedated before that mention made in *Gen. 1. 1.* *ἐν ἀρχῇ*, *In the beginning God created the Heaven and the Earth*; because the sequel words and consequent expressions do seem to relate only to the visible World, whose beginning was from meer Chaos and confusion, and the real end thereof, the Creation of the most perfect creature of his order (being then man). Now the intellectual World of rational and sublimer spirits did not need the help of these material Creatures (in which  
the

the gradual work of the Divinity is so punctually described): so that I think we may upon the most rational grounds infer the real existence of Angels, before this visible emanation of the Divine Essence and so not to the morning of the first day as some of the Fathers do positively affirm; because indeed the Angels, those immaterial spirits, have not, neither enjoy any succession of night or day: for though we read of the Prince of Darkness, the Devil, this I take to be only spoken of a state analogous to night, in the dismal horror of it; for I cannot see why the Devils should suffer any more punishment by that darkness, which is the real privation of material light, than we can suffer any afflicting and pungent pain by shutting our eyes at noon day, or at mid-night, when we contemplate, or possibly reflect on any immaterial object in a dream: Yet the Devils may seem to make mens Hell on Earth, by strongly disaffecting mens senses by such objects, which become volatile in the fancy; and this does appear from that icy trembling that sometimes does seize (in the hottest season) on some flagitious

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ous Criminals, as on notorious murderers, the Ghost of the murdered persons seeming to walk in their disquieted fancy; and so to become in this kind apparition to them: so that I think on this account we may reasonably suppose that the Infernal spirits proper Hell does seem chiefly to consist in their flying out from the fruition of God, in that sphere of light and life wherein they were at first created; and also in their continued enmity against the Lord in the evil, contrary to that good: and so they thereby did endeavour to propagate this horrid enmity throughout the whole Creature so far as possibly they could; in which state these Angels did, and still do passively make their own hell, which might probably be effected no long time after their Creation, which was antecedent in time to that of mans, as must be most rationally believ'd, and as fully conjectur'd from Satans presenting his gilded (though poysonous) pill in the first temptation to receive it, so that the Devil did no sooner make one single onset on mans innocency, but he batter'd it down, and laid it level with the ground.

Now

Now from the fatal event of mans Fall in the ruins of his integrity, we must of necessity infer that God did see it in his infinite prescience and divine fore-knowledge, and the miserable sequel of this degeneration of man from created perfection: for from the nature of the Divine Will God could not create any thing but what is truly perfect; yet what was so created, was not bound by any invincible fatality to continue so; whence it must unavoidably follow, that the creature must be capable of lapsing or falling, *volente Deo*: And as God could not prevent it, so neither could he from the nature of his infinite perfection in the leastwise impel the Fall of man, because the greatest property of the Divine perfection is to improve it self by the emanation of his goodness in the Creature, which wretched mans lapsation did really oppose, and hinder. So that in fine, the total and adequate cause of the Fall of both Angels and men must derive its sole original from Angels and men themselves; for it is perfectly contradictory to the very nature of infinite and divine wisdom to



to propagate greater good by evil; since the natural growth of all positive good to that which is highest and truly superlative, is by degrees through that good which is a comparative one, as the most perfect state and temperament of body in nature can never own its origine to an intermediate disease.

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**CHAP.**

CHAP. XVII.

17. **A**ND which is farther considerable from the very nature of Gods Providence, we know it was truly impossible, that he should ordain and decree, and so cause mans fall, it being altogether repugnant to the purity of the divine Essence, and of his incomprehensible Goodness, either mediately or immediately, to effect the least evil; and the acts, and the sadder events and consequences of it: yet the Almighty might so direct mans lapse, as the means of glorifying his great and abundant goodness, in the several objects of Mercy and Justice, which were the necessary consequents of his creation: Now God by his absolute Sovereignty was not bound, and so truly obliged to hinder mans fall, or indeed he might not be able to effect it; for he would certainly have preserved man in a blessed estate, if the creature of a free will had not casually

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prevented him, ( as is evident from the foundation of Gods mercy, which was laid in that cautional essay of mans obedience, in not eating of the fruit of the Tree of knowledge of good and evil ) yet the divine Wisdom was sufficiently able to order and direct a present evil, to a future good end ; and this therefore should satisfy the greatest Sceptick beyond all cavil and farther dispute, that it was most reasonable, that God should create man, as should best exalt the glory of his unspeakable goodness : so that we must duly and consequently charge the blame of sin upon our selves ( whose spurious and degenerate issue it is ). And it cannot in the least be imagined, that the great God, who is righteousness it self, should ordain that which is really destructive to the purity of its being ; and to make man only to destroy him : This were all one, and as vainly absurd, as if a wise and skilful Architect should throw down that hastily with one hand, which he builds up with another ; or that Parents should be so prodigiously unnatural, as to destroy their tender issue which they have really begotten : there is an  
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innate principle of great compassion in every creature towards their own off-spring, even in them that move in the lowest Orb or Sphere of Animals; and shall we not allow the greatest perfection of essential goodness to the Most High, who does exercise the most singular and tender love and indulgence to the creatures of his own creation? For the glory of the Divine Nature shines forth, and becomes most conspicuous, in this great Epithet of being merciful and truly gracious (for goodness is the highest perfection thereof): Now Gods punitive Justice is his strange act, meerly extorted from him, & so only consequential from the lapse or fall of the creature; and it cannot possibly derive it self from the nature of the great Creator: so that that must be the Lords Motto, which the Emperour *Otho* the Second, and all good men ought to take, and alwayes own and vindicate, *pacem cum hominibus, cum vitiis bellum*; for the Almighty's war is made with vices, and not with persons: for that punishment does rather become his refuge, than his choice, and his defence against rebellion, and not the offence,



or designed hurt of his creature ; since no man can charge God with the evil of sin , there being nothing properly his, but the good Justice of punishment, according to that of S. James, Chap. 1. ver. 13, 14, 15. *Let no man say; when he is tempted, I am tempted of God ; for God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lusts, and enticed: then lust when it conceiveth, bringeth forth sin; and sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death.* So that *malum culpa*, and *malum pœne*, were both born together ; the evil of sin , and that of suffering becoming Twins. Thus you may easily see , that the propagation of Gods Judgements, is only continued in the line of sin ; of which kind, is abominable pride , and detestable covetousness ; for both these sins are really implied in the word Lust , which is the chief root, and *vena umbilicalis* of both ; they mutually deriving birth and nourishment from it. And indeed there is no sin or evil , but is naturally its own scourge, ( all iniquity being truly self-punishing ) for the vilest Criminal with his own hands cruelly inflicts his  
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own punishment : for God is truly good, or rather more properly, goodness it self; the creature also consequently might have been good, had he not fallen from the state of perfection wherein he was created. So that from the evidence of right reason it must be inferred, that whatsoever is of the true and intrinsic nature of good in man, is of God; he neither menacing or inflicting the least punishment on us (barely as men) but as continuing sinful and disobedient. Hence the irrevocable sentence of reprobation cannot be awarded meerly to mens persons, to their bare individual natures, but to their real sinful works, and viler actions: so that sin and evil must truly be attributed to the creature, and thus become destructive of what is Gods in us: for the Lord in this war of the creature with himself, seems to act the part of an impartial and just Moderator, so ordering and directing the evil of sin in such a manner, as to reduce and conquer the Rebel-creature by the iustice of his divine punishment (if possible) back again unto himself; as may be plainly illustrated by that discrasie, or



*mala intemperies* brought into the natural body by a Fever, which by the concoction of nature, suffering the Paroxysms, or exacerbation of fits, is commonly worn away, and so the *Crisis* or the first healthful temperament may in some measure be restored again: which yet is not alwayes found so, as to the estate of the soul; for God, like a wise Physician, prescribes, and so sends sharper punishments and afflictions, to purge out sin (as the most proper remedy for the disease), yet they do not work the same equal cure in all: for all men are not thereby healed of their transgressions, and so recover a more perfect state, though some do make a better use of the sharpest methods of the Lord, as of their afflictions, which many times become medicinal, which are partakers of the nature of the venomous Scorpion in them, for they many times carry antidote and cure against their own stings and wounds.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVIII.

18. **T**HUS I presume I have made it evident, that Gods Vindictive Justice is his strange act; for the divine goodness is such, that he alwayes pities, where he must punish; as in *Lam. 3. 33.* *For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.* He is very unwilling to strike, and to lift up his hand to punishment: 'tis not his nature, but his sole refuge; so that the divine Justice becomes emergent from meer necessity: For the Almighty could not possibly be, and not an avenger of sin (the opposer of his very being). And now all mankind being thrown as low by *Adam's* fall, as misery could cast them; and being almost sunk into its depths, and so fainting for a speedy relief, and swooning at the dreadful terrors of the Law, which were introduc'd with the greatest solemnity of horror, yet then God was pleased to revive poor languish-



ing man again with the comforts and cordials of redemption, through his only beloved Son. And this does clearly appear from the very dawning of Gods mercy in that first Gospel-Promise made to mankind in *Gen. 13. 15. The seed of the woman shall break the Serpents head.* And now the means of grace and mercy must be sought for and enquired after, and which must be necessarily found either in the creature or the Creator: As for the creature, he could not re-ensphere himself into the same happy condition he did lose; as some bodies overcome the power of a disease, by a good temperament, and so obtain perfect health without the accession of any external cause or *recipe*. Now this was not possible in mans lapsed estate; for being fallen, he must satisfy divine Justice, either by his active or passive obedience; that is, by performing some duties equal and commensurate to his crime and guilt; which man is in no capacity to effect; for as *S. Luke* tells us, *Chap. 17. 10.* that *when we have done all, we are but unprofitable servants*: or else man must expiate the guilt of his sin by due suffering for it; and that must

must be to all eternity : for if eternity is an infinitely successive, continued duration ; then certainly, as the sin, so neither will the punishment ever cease : so that it unavoidably follows, that there could no satisfaction proportionable to the demerit of sin be made by us, but by the incarnation, passion, and resurrection of our blessed Saviour, that being the firmation and seal of all. But here our thoughts should not carry too high a sail towards the pursuit, or full comprehension of the great Myserie of our Redemption ; for here is a gulf that scorns our fathom, not only as to search into the perfect knowledge of it, but to make a full discovery of the greatness of the mercy ; insomuch that S. Paul was driven to his ὡς βάθος, as in Rom. 11. 33. *O the depth of the goodness and mercy of God in Christ !* and in a rapture more of astonishment than contemplation, the Apostle styles our Redemption, *the myserie of his will* : Beza translates it, τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ, *sacramentum voluntatis ejus, the Sacrament of his will*, which you know does really abound with myserie, as well as with the greatest mercy. Thus you may easily



easily see, that the Gospel is not only the Treasury and Empory of the Divine Goodness, but likewise Gods Law of spiritual life prescribed to mankind through Christ : For the acts of a Princes favour are granted under special Covenants of obedience and duty, in the doing of which, his Subjects may claim a title to, and interest in his Royal goodness and munificence : so that if the doing of some special acts enjoined by God, do lay a mutual obligation on him for his blessing, and likewise on men for the doing of their duty, then can no person pretend any claim to those signal boons and benefits declared in the Gospel, but only such as are engaged thereby, and do perform such real obedience, by which they become truly capable of the promised blessings : and we can neither in Law, nor in Equity pretend, or hope to receive the benefit or advantage of a Covenant, without performing the real condition thereof. So that from hence you may observe, that it is not from the nature of an absolute and an unconditional Decree, but from the exercising the duties, and obeying the precepts of righteousness and holiness, which

which gives us the best assurance of eternal happiness : And now what shall become of those comfortable Doctrines, ( as some fond Predestinarians term them ) which they have so greedily imbib'd, and still nourish, That they shall be inheritors of everlasting felicity, though they cannot produce the least evidence and title to it, deriv'd from the integrity and uprightness of their lives and actions : 'Tis true, and it must be as freely confess'd, that our blessed Saviour did pay an infinite debt due to Divine Justice by reason of sin ; but it was only for such, who should return their obedience and due gratitude to him for the same ; and that by treading in the footsteps of his most holy life ; giving the clearest demonstration of it, by obeying Gods divine Ordinances enjoin'd and prescrib'd in the Gospel, wherein the Spirit of Grace by his precepts, his inspiration and illumination and rational direction, does recall and bring us back to God : and thus we have the greatest and the most eminent advantages of Gods grace and blessings, by the due and perfect conformity of our lives to his sacred will revealed



revealed in his Word. So that all the duties that are commanded, and which Christian Religion does point at, and directs and presses to, they are but as so many reciprocal pledges of honour and homage between God and his creature, which do equally oblige the one to confer his benefits; and so on the other hand, for the other to perform his enjoyn'd duty; to this very end, that he may become a partaker of the blessings and rewards intended for: so that they both equally stand, and fully are in such a capacity, as the one to convey and derive his mercy, so the other (that is man) to return due praise, and as ready thanksgiving for the same, as a temporal Landlord and his Tenants are firmly and jointly tied; as the one by solemn covenants, so the other, by services and rents: and as no man can entitle himself to any tenure on earth, but by such peculiar pacts and rents; so neither can any man claim any right to an eternal inheritance, but by his duties and services, consisting in Gospel-obedience.

C H A P.

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C H A P. XIX.

19. **N**OW from what I have so plainly discours'd of, you may clearly perceive, that the Doctrine of Absolute Predestination is altogether repugnant to right reason, and the express tenour of the Gospel: For God from the nature of his infinite Goodness, would have all men to be saved, and that by making use of the prescribed helps and blessed means of the Gospel, which are in themselves every way sufficient for the salvation of all; though it be impossible that the Almighty should win and prevail upon every man, by the preaching of his sacred Word, in the most convincing and effectual manner. Now the reason of this is very obvious, in respect of the several incapacities of some persons to receive, and effectually to embrace the means of grace and salvation; as may be clearly demonstrated by the Parable of the Sower in *S. Matthew's*



*S. Matthew's Gospel, Chap. 13. v. 3.*  
The seed there was the same, though it did not fall on the same equally good and fertile grounds; and so the Sower could not expect a proportionable return from it. The Lord does many times meet with some very untractable, stony and incorrigible natures, which by their fallings and apostasie, by horrid impieties from God, do really deprive themselves of the prerogative and indulgence of his mercy in Christ, which is only attainable by holiness and newness of life; yet the Almighty does not compel any to the use of the means of his Grace and Goodness; but he does very frequently in the sacred Scripture express his most importunate desire to save all men, and that by pressing the right application of the merits of our blessed Saviour, and all in order to eternal life: and that they may be gain'd to salvation by the most powerful and effectual preaching of his sacred Word; however too too many resist such charms of divine goodness; and they are of so refractory a temper, that they are so desperately obstinate, and really unwilling to be restor'd to a future

ture blessed estate, and that by the expiation of that all-sufficient Sacrifice of our blessed Saviour once offered upon the Cross. Neither can it be reasonably expected since the fall, that all should become partakers of eternal life; for then the redemption of lost mankind, had not been a perfect design of mercy, neither had it been the real effect of Gods grace and goodness: for if all men, the most flagitious, should be actually saved, this had not been an argument of Gods paternal love, but the meer result of fatal necessity: and then the horrid injustice and barbarous tyranny of those cruel Persecutors, who did rejoice, and warm their hands at the flames of the holy Martyrs bodies that were burnt: I say their cruelty then, had been all one with the undaunted patience and invincible courage of those heroick sufferers for the truth, and for the Gospel sake: Nay, they needed not then to have so valiantly contended for the faith, that is, for the Doctrine of the Gospel once delivered to the Saints. Finally, Laws themselves then would become unlawful, and their coercive power would have been weak,



weak, invalid and useles; then all the purer precepts of vertue and holiness, with the appendant seals of the promises of future blessings, would have been vain, disannull'd and ineffectual: and then the most powerful dissuaves from the perpetration of sin, with the sharper menaces of punishment to be inflicted on the criminal, would all disappear, and immediately vanish, if the greatest sinner, as well as the most eminent Saint should arrive at Heaven and eternal glory. This vain opinion does destroy the very foundation of all Christian Religion: for take away this enclosure, then the whole World would lye in common; then the purest Saint, and the most polluted sinner, would promiscuously herd together: but we must know, that though the voice of the sacred Scripture speaks generally to all (so that the call to mercy and salvation, is as universal as the design of it) yet all men will never obey it, neither will they come to Christ, that they may have life. There will alwayes be some Tares growing in the midst of the Wheat; there will be some dross incorporating with pure gold; and there

there will still be some unregenerate, as well as others truly regenerate persons in this World: Some will still continue out, as well as others in Christ; which to be really in him, is not barely to be initiated, or to enter in by the door of Baptism, and so to dwell in the Church by the frequent repetitions of the holy Sacrament of the Lords Supper, because these seals of grace may be directly set, and as plainly put to a meer blank; but to be really in Christ, is to be grafted into him with the *Cyon* of divine grace, and to bring forth the plentiful fruits thereof, in obedience and newness of life: 'tis to be really perswaded in conscience, that the duty of a creature, should be a constant conformity with his Creator: and 'tis farther observable, that all men being convinc'd by the very Light of Nature, of their manifold failings in their duty from a clear apprehension of their obliquities, or *avouia*, their irregularities from the rule of Gods Word: such have endeavoured (as I partly intimated in my former discourse) to purge their consciences from their fouler pollutions, and so to make

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their atonement, and effect their reconciliation with God, by the frequent sacrifice, and death of the creature; fully insinuating thereby, that what was inflicted on the poor Beast, was properly due to themselves; and that as the blood of the sacrifice was poured forth, so there should be as great an effusion of their own for their iniquities. Now you have heard before, that the *Jews* did make these Offertories by the especial dictates of God himself; for all these carnal exercises were but testimonies of their infirmities, and the most solemn and significant pledges of the nearest conformity of their hearts to God in his wayes; and so consequently, the outward acts were nothing available in the meer *opus operatum*, but in the effectual application of them, but only as they were concurrent with an humble obedience to God. So that the *Jews* should have look'd through their Ceremonies, to that inward purity and sanctity of soul and spirit which they did very clearly represent; they should have directed their levell higher, and so aim'd at true righteousness of heart and life. This was then the general Religion

Religion of the World, and more especially, that of Gods peculiar people the *Jews*; and then all men that were conscious to themselves of their natural corruptions, and their aberrations from the wayes of God, the Lord in the abyſſe of his infinite Wiſdom, was pleaſed, by a ſpecial exertion of himſelf in Grace and Goodneſs, to vindicate to himſelf a peculiar people; and he did ſo reveal himſelf to them by his miraculous Providence, as plainly to teach ſuch exerciſes of that Natural Worſhip by Sacrifice, as ſhould aſſure them of his eſpecial favour, till he himſelf would by his immediate preſence advance them to ſome higher perfection, and into a greater liberty. Notwithſtanding this, Gods favourite people, through the ſtrength of natural pravity, and the ſuggeſtions of the Devil, neglecting, and ſo loſing their inward obedience, and that by reſting on the dead works of bare outward performance, and by degrees corrupting and ſleighting them too, as might beſt gratifie their inſulting appetites and luſts, they did then incur the ſevereſt judgments, as evident teſtimonies of the



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Almighty's displeasure ; so that the Weeds having over-run the Garden of the Lord, the good Seed seem'd to be choak'd, and so did become invisible : and now was the fulness of time, that God was pleased to come by his immediate presence, truly to reform and save all that was lost ; for all dying in *Adam*, may be really saved by Christ, who is the second *Adam* : and so a good Father of the Church affirms, *frustra mortuus est Christus si alios vivificare non potest*, that is, *in vain did our blessed Saviour dye, if he could not give perfect life to all men* : and S. John in his Gospel, Chap. 1. 29. does encourage men to behold the Lamb of God, *ecce agnus Dei* ! he does not only point out his person with his finger, but he makes an open declaration of what Christ hath done, that he did take, or bear away the sins of the world. Nay, Christ did come to reveal his sacred Will in a farther indulgence of his grace and goodness, and that by inclosing more within the visible Pale of the Church, by calling and bringing in a peculiar of the Gentiles; and all this was, that God might make them that were already called, and they to be called,

led, capable of his divine administration of mercy, (namely) in the translating them from that of grace in mortality, to an assured state of glory in immortality: and that by improving a temporal finite, into an eternal infinite perfection. Now all this was fully effected and consummated by the uniting of the Godhead to the nature of poor man; in which nature God did enliven and illuminate the humane Spirit, and that by his holy one. So that in the person of our blessed Saviour, the incarnate Word, he did exhibit a perfect Copy, and an exact exemplar of all the imaginable perfections that humane nature was truly capable of on earth, and God did then seal, and give a full assurance to men, that the imitation of the blessed *Jesus* in the uprightness and sanctity of their lives, should be the most infallible evidence of their eternal future happiness and perfection: and all this was to inspire dull man to a lively and vigorous prosecution of his duty under the dispensation of the Gospel; which does principally consist in mans earnest endeavours after greater degrees of holiness and true piety: and you know,



that when the Lord made a promise of the Land of *Canaan*, a Land abounding with all variety of temporal blessings, it was upon the account of their due obedience unto him and his Laws. Now what was in the type to the *Jews*, is in the truth to every Christian, so that none can aspire and come to the heavenly *Canaan*; but they that go in the direct path of duty towards it; all which the remiss and lazy Predestinarians do violently reject, and as unreasonably oppose.

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## C H A P.

**G. H. A. P. XX.**

20. **N**ow in the next place I shall make it my business to engage all men (if possible) to a sincere practice of their duty towards God, with a sense of which, mankind was at first born. Our Saviour being God and Man, and that in one person, when he did come into the World, he did then open and enucleate the Religion of the *Jews* involv'd in Sacrifice, and so did present the Church with the kernel of saving Truth, taken out of the shell of outward Ceremony-Performances under the Law, and now truly blanch't from the closest films of error under the Gospel: For, both our blessed Saviour & his Apostles, did constantly preach and declare, that the very soul and life of those Sacrifices, was a very zealous desire, in some measure, to punish themselves, and so to expiate the wilful disobedience of the Sacrificers, to obtain a greater strength to walk in new and exact obedience to all the



Law of God : therefore their bare performance of those external Duties, without true renovation of life, was but really as a loathed Carcass without a Soul, that did stink in the nostrills of the Almighty, who was not to be serv'd in the naked Letter without the Spirit, but by the letter, in the power and energy of the holy Spirit : So that these carnal exercises were not absolutely commanded by the Divine Precept, as an acceptable service in themselves, but as evident helps of their infirmities, whereby God did by corporal duties insinuate, and so accept of spiritual ones : As to instance briefly in their Sacrament of Circumcision, the Lord did by that act, intimate the mortifying and cutting off of natural concupiscence ; and so he did allow of this pledge of carnal obedience, so far as it was a *νεκροσιον*, or testimony of inward spiritual obedience, according to that of S. Paul, Rom. 2. 28. For *He is not a Jew, that is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh, εν τω φανερω*, which does openly appear in that, but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly, εν τω κρυπτω, in the hidden man ; and circumcision is that of the

*the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise and commendation is not of men, but of God.* So that our Saviour did very severely reprove the Doctors of the *Jews*, the learned Scribe and the starch't formal Pharisee; and indeed in them the whole people of God, who from a vain affected Phari-  
saical imitation, ambitiously courted popular applause; they did desire the Encomiums of men, more than they did the praise of God; who were truly critical, and very exact in tithing Mint, Anise and Cummin; that is, were more zealous of the due observance of these lighter things of Ceremony and letter Worship, weighing out all these in their own scales to a grain; in the mean time they did neglect and pass by the weightier matters and greater duties of the Law, which were Mercy and Justice among men: However our Saviour did not so sharply reprehend that so nice and curious exactness in external performances, but because the *Jews* did so hypocritically under this *velamen*, or colour of perfect obedience, leave the great fundamental duties and obligations of the Gospel undone; by reason that they,  
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like *Ixion*, did fondly embrace a Cloud, they did only grasp the shadow of true Worship, for secular and worldly advantage ; and so they did carelessly neglect, and contemn'd the very substance of Religion : For Christ tells them, that they made clean the meer superficies, or outside of the Cup, and of the Platter , whilst the inside was full of horrible Extortion and Excess ; and that they made long Prayers, in which they did so largely expatiate, that they might possibly enlarge their stomachs, and excite their keener appetites, and all that they might more securely devour Widows houses. Thus you see the people of the *Jews* had much of outward, but nothing at all of inward sanctity (the great requisite, and best ingredient of Christianity). Now I might shew you more at large, that the *Jews* were guilty of all manner of impurity, and of the grossest and foulest pollutions ; so that now it was high time, or indeed the proper fulness of time, for the Mission of Christ, the Eternal Son of God, into the World, and the necessary acting by him ; the great design of all, was to remove the abused Worship and Ser-

Service of God, and so to introduce and establish a more refin'd and spiritual one in the room of it ; and to put an end to the Law ; and that not by a total abolishing, but by a perfect ad-implimentation of it, in the sublimated Precepts, and purer Practice of our blessed Saviour ; for that was the signal end of his coming here on Earth, to confirm the love of God in the hearts of all his people, and that in respect of their duty ; as in Titus 2. 14. *Who came, and did give himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purifie to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works,* and that in order to eternal glory ; though some now a-days have found out a new way, and a ready method, by the support of some destructive absolute Predestinarian principles, to reconcile the most vicious practices on earth, with a certain expectation of Heaven and Happiness at last. But to proceed, the Jews, and especially their chief Doctors, the High Priests, the Scribes and Pharisees, did gaze so much upon the shining glory of the outward Temple of God, that they could not see in it the inward Temple of the Holy Ghost ; and like



like the Crafts-men of *Diana*, they made such huge advantages by Sacrifices, and so raised such vast Banks of wealth, that they would not endure to hear of that grand Doctrine of the Communion of Saints, in the mutual support of one another. They were impatient of a discourse that runs, that *catena charitatis* was *vinculum universi*, that is, *That this chain of reciprocal love was the firmest band of perfection*, (tho' they might in some measure read this duty, and as soon see it to be legible in the very Book of Nature). So that when our Saviour more powerfully pressed the *Jews* to a diffusive Charity, they then did tax, not only the Doctrine, but Christ himself, as a great Innovator, and they did not seek to inform themselves of, or reform themselves by this Rule; but (if possible) to entrap our Saviour in his preaching on this so important a subject; so that, in fine, their desperate malice did grow to that height of malignity, as to destroy for the Temples sake, the very God of the Temple himself. Now our Lord by his eternal Prescience, fore-knowing and fore-seeing this; yet to confirm his Disciples, and with them,

them, all people in the way of obedience, in the real truth of this his spiritual service: he did, I say, for all that would by Gods especial Grace embrace it, establish a most significant emblem, clearly illustrating the genuine meaning of Circumcision under the Gospel, by a plain washing with water, that being the clearest sign of purity, and which was an initiation by the holy Spirit concurring with the outward Elements, to and by an inward sanctifying Grace; which should direct and corroborate them and others in a spiritual life in the Sacrament of holy Baptism; and then the Son of God perceiving he should be sacrificed to his Father, by the cruel malice of the *Jews*, he did farther, as a Prophet and a Priest, even sacrifice himself for those who should be heirs of eternal salvation by him; and he did the very night before he suffered, consecrate and make use of the Elements of Bread and Wine, which were the most perspicuous emblem of their Carnal Sacrament, I mean the *Jewish* Passeeover, which was instituted under the Law, as a Memoir of their freedom from temporal bondage; and Christ did ap-  
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point this Sacrament under the Gospel, to be a real declaration of our spiritual deliverance, and the recovery of our liberty from the vilest servitude of sin and corruption. Now the outward Sign our Saviour blessed, and so he brake it, and did give it to his Disciples, and with them, to all the Church, as an infallible pledge of that salvation they should certainly receive, who were and did become conformable to that spiritual life, which he did still teach by his Doctrine, and which he ratified by his own exemplary Practice, and did fully confirm, by no less than antecedent Miracles, and consequent ones after his death. Now to come closer to my proposed *Thesis*; So that briefly then, to be in Christ *nomine* and *re*, by appellation and essence, is *First*, To be admitted by Baptism, *fluminis & flaminis*, of *Water* and of the *Spirit*, (that being an outward Element of internal Grace) into this of Christs spiritual life: And thus to feel *baptisma flaminis*, a strong and mighty prevailing power of Gods Spirit continually; struggling with our innate corruptions and evil suggestions; and so gradually getting the upper

per hand, and that by conquering the force and power of sin. Now for the strengthening and nourishing of this wonderful power of the Holy Spirit of Grace, there must be superadded a frequent earnest desire of, and so receiving this aliment of Grace in the holy Sacrament, which will still keep and preserve us in the constant communion of Saints; that is, in a firm union with Christ, and with one another in love; in which is principally seated the real life of true and saving Grace: Now some indeed have nothing to shew that they are Christs Souldiers, but only the Colours of the Sacrament, of him who is the Captain of our salvation. Now I presume to call them Colours, because such meer Professors have only the accidents, and not the substance of the Sacrament: the true Christian shewing forth the life of Christ, by the fruits of saving faith, and real sanctity; the other, only bearing the leaves of a formal profession of Christ and his Doctrine, who yet will allow of the Gospel, but will not perform the duties enjoyn'd, consisting in Evangelical Holiness; so that it is to be feared, that instead  
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of that encouraging and heavenly voice, *Come ye blessed*, such men will hear the sadder denunciation and final sentence, *Go ye cursed*; that is, they that were the most solemnly avowed Professors of Christ, notwithstanding their most importunate invocations of him, and that with the repeated and multiplied ingemination of our Saviours blessed Saviours Name and Title *Lord, Lord*; though they did thereby make a tacit confession of Christs Sovereignty and Infinite Power. Now all these were but the faint Echoes, and the various sounds of an empty profession; and they will signifie nothing, nor become any way available to such, who do not practise those Christian duties our Saviour commands and enjoyns in the Gospel. For the Wedding Garment, by which God is said to know and distinguish them who are his, must be understood of the inward sanctity and indument of the heart: It does not consist in the external garb or habit, but in that of the inward man; which does plainly discover it self in the uprightness and integrity of our conversations. From these so large and ample premises, you may easily

easily collect, and as quickly see, that I have now demonstrated an absolute necessity of true obedience in a continued line of duty and service of God from the first *Adam*, which runs exactly even to the time of Christ, the second *Adam*: For the sad Fall of Man was foreseen in Gods Prescience, or Fore-knowledge, or in his eternal Providence, which was for the glorifying his Goodness, in the exaltation of the same in Mercy and Justice; all which must be effected by bringing Man to a life of Grace and true Obedience, and consequently so to a state of everlasting glory; the effectual means of which, being the embracing the true Religion, which is evidently declared in the Gospel, and as fully established by the coming of our Saviour, and his most Divine Practices, when he entered on the stage of the World: Therefore none should presume, either out of a vain opinion of the certainty of their future blessed estate, or from an unhappy Faction, or from some false and large and loose Predestinarian Tenets, to contemn the constant use of Means, and the great advantages of Gods Grace, in the right administration of  
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his sacred Word and Sacraments ; for by these, as by certain signs and infallible evidences, the Almighty hath joynd and married our Christian duties, and the blessed rewards thereof, together, and that in an indissoluble union: The undoubted truth whereof, is fully proclaimed in Holy Writ: if *Elias* had refused to have smote the Waters of *Jordan* with his Mantle, as in *2 Kings 2. 8.* I verily believe, that Gods Spirit would not have divided the Waters asunder to give him and *Elisba* passage, so as the Text sayes, *to go on plain and dry ground.* Neither would *Naaman* have ever been cured of his Leprosie, had he neglected to wash in the River of *Jordan*: or if he had disobeyed the strict Injunctions of the Prophet, *to wash*, and that *seven times* in that River. Thus you see, here is an evident confirmation of this truth, That we must make a diligent use of Divine Means, if ever we expect to be made capable of the blessed effects thereof: And we have a clear instance to back this, in that of *Joash* King of *Israel*, *2 Kings 13. 18.* there you read, that the Almighty did give a Victory to this King over the *Assyrians*, but

*Joash*

*Joash* having not a quick and courageous Zeal to pursue Gods Grace, and his Victory, over his Enemies; wherefore because he did smite the ground but three or four times (he being then as careless of the Blessing, as he was of the Command) whereas out of a strong faith that he should fight the Lord of Hosts his Battle victoriously, he should manfully have struck the ground six or seven times, as the good Prophet *Elisba* told and advised him. Now this was the peculiar reason why the blessing was lessened and abridged, and contracted into a narrower compass; insomuch, that from hence, it is clearly evinced, That they that are within the Covenants of Gods Grace and Mercy, neglecting, and as scornfully rejecting the right use of the Means thereof, their wilful disobedience is an infallible note, and true sign, as well to themselves, as to others, that they shall never have any portion, or any real benefit by Christ; any the least advantage by his death and sufferings: So that it is only our obedient hearts and holy lives, which render us partakers of eternal blessings by the redemption of our Saviour: and



therefore God does express his most ardent desires to the salvation of men, and that by making use of the greatest incentives to their duty ; and so to improve them in the great advantages, and effectual means of Gods Grace in this state of life, and all in order to an exalted condition in future glory.

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**CHAP.**

CHAP. XXI.

I Shall now readily descend to confirm you in a full belief of the infinite Love of God to sinful Man, which is truly inconsistent with the nature of Absolute Decrees, which indeed is more pathetical than any language can be; the highest strains of expression cannot reach it; view but the Scripture, where the Mercy and Goodness of God is very legible and perspicuous, yet the Penmen thereof, seem to be at a loss in the very manner of declaring the Almighty's Goodness, in the withholding of his Judgements, as in *Hos. 11. 8.* *How shall I give thee up Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? My heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.* Here the Prophets deep-fetcht love contracts his language, and his words languish into sighs. With what great relentings, with what passionate regret,



regret, and deep resentments of grief, does the Lord think to execute his Judgements on a disobedient people? So that like a compassionate Judge, he seems to punish himself with pungent sorrow, when he is to declare, and pass sentence on a Malefactor. Now what Arguments of tender love, does the Lord use all along in the Scriptures? What solemn indearments of kindness are there in the same? and all to perswade men to their duty, and so to embrace their own eternal happiness. To punish poor man, goes even to Gods very heart; it pierces him with the extremity and sharpness of grief and sorrow. The Almighty does seem to sit down and consider, and gently deliberate, so that he goes by a certain Climax, by degrees to Judgement, *len-to gradu*, in a slow pace, and step by step: The Lord is so unwilling to inflict his punishment, that his very bowels are moved; and so shew forth his averfness to it; and that by *turning within him*. Nay, his bowels rise up, and seem to intercede, that the Divine indignation for sin might fall low, and that all might run in the channel of his

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Infinite Goodness and Mercy. Indeed there is scarce any Metaphor either in Scripture, or in Nature to be found, that can sufficiently illustrate the Almighty's unspeakable compassion to mankind. Now if God did not really design the salvation of men, what need he use those sweet strains of Rhetorick, and such charming perswasions for men to be happy? and that in choosing life, rather than death; as the Prophet does expostulate the case with the *Israelites*, in the most compassionate style towards them; nay, with a seeming kind of indignation he urges it, *Why will ye dye, O house of Israel?* as in *Ezek. 18. 31, 32.* And he does inforce all with a most convincing reason; *for I have no pleasure in the death of him that dyeth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn your selves and live.* Certainly the Lord would not use these sweet and obliging methods, and pious artifices, to take poor Mortals with guile, and to inviegle them with the real opinion of his exceeding great willingness to save mankind, if he had pass'd and seal'd a firm Decree in his eternal Councils to the contrary, that men shall never be made partakers of



everlasting happiness. This Doctrine is altogether inconsistent with his Incomprehensible Wisdom and Divine Goodness : so that to admit of this, would be a piece of the highest blasphemy ; it would be to make the great Creator, become as vile and as treacherous as a creature ; to resemble somewhat of the *Hyæna*, who seems to have the voice of a Man ; for she counterfeits the greatest humanity, assumes the most compassionate tenderness, and all to make a prey of such Travellers as come near her. Now to allow of this Doctrine of Irresistible Decrees, is to make the Almighty subject to the most servile arts of flattery, to court men into a belief, and to complement men into an opinion of his readiness to advance men into a state of salvation ; ( so that if we grant the Hypothesis of Absolute Predestination, then the quite contrary is really intended ). Now surely God did not design to sport himself with our ruine, and to make pastime with our destruction, and to excite in us the most ardent desires of Heaven and happiness, which he never did intend to satisfy. This would be the visible effect of guile in God, and of  
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current of Gods promised Mercies and Benefits fall down right, and so ebb into a privation of enjoyment. No; we build our expectations of future happiness upon a Rock, on Christ himself, the sure foundation of all Gods Promises; as in 2 Cor. 1. 20. for all the Promises of God *in him are Yea, and in him, Amen, unto the glory of God.* Now upon this account we should answer the great end of the largesses of Gods promised favours, which S. Paul does encourage, and as earnestly direct us to, as in 2 Cor. 7. 1. *Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse our selves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.* So that the sacred Word of God you see, and his gracious Promises of Mercy and Pardon, and that to all men, they neither admit of, neither are they consistent with either fraud, or the least falsehood; neither can they be arraigned for any imposture: Neither Lastly, Do they carry any colourable design or project of imposing on any man; since God is exceeding willing that all men should be saved, and who hath a real inclination thereunto. For Gods nature is perfect

perfect Goodness, 'tis a stranger to Cruelty, and it hath no affinity with severity and rigour. *Plutarch* relating the horrible cruelty of the Heathens, who to appease their angry Deities, did sacrifice to them both Men and Women; whereupon he plainly affirms, *That it had been far better with Diagoras and Protagoras, and their followers, to deny the Being of a God, than that he should delight in the blood of men, in such dismal tragical acts and butcheries.* Certainly, it were as well to disallow the very Being of a God, as to entertain the least belief, that he takes pleasure in the death and destruction of his creature: Now as the Almighty cannot but be, and exist, so he cannot possibly be conceived to exercise the least Cruelty towards his off-spring, on whom he hath at first conferr'd a being; and who hath fully declared in his Word, that he as earnestly desires and wills their eternal well-being: Why should then some bold Predestinarians espouse this unreasonable Opinion, That Gods secret Will, and his revealed one, are really inconsistent, meerly *ἀνίστα*, such men making the one to wage war with the other;



other ; and so they do set his Decrees and Commands (these being but the legible Transcripts of the other ) at open defiance. For we can never really imagine, that the great God does either speak or enjoyn , what he does not really mean , and as fully intend should be performed : the Scripture shews , and plainly points out what God requires of us ; it doth fully evince the reasonableness of the Divine Commands ; and it does evidently demonstrate the great agreeableness and perfect correspondence his sacred Injunctions have with our rational natures ; and God hath enforc'd all with the assurance of his gracious Promise, that we shall infallibly reap the benefit of well doing, if we faint not. So that our hearts should not sink under our burdens, since we have Gods cordial Promises of his Grace and Mercy to enliven and quicken us ; as in *Mat. 11. 18.* *Come unto me all ye that labour under the pressure of your sins , and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* So that we should not amidst such importunate invitations to life, and the louder calls of Gods Mercies, make at last an unhappy choice of death. And  
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now I dare appeal to the breast or belief of any sober person, whether there can be any Indictment or Accusation drawn up, and exhibited against them, who cannot be properly said to be guilty, or worthy of the least blame, which they cannot possibly avoid, as being truly necessitated thereunto, and that by a fatal Decree. If a Master should be so severe, to require as much work of his servant, when his hands are fast tyed, as when he is at liberty, certainly this must argue an unheard of Cruelty, joyn'd with the greatest Severity: This is as unreasonably to exact, as *Pharaoh* did of the poor *Israelites*, their constant number of Bricks, when he denyed them Straw, the due Materials for it. Hence *Mr. Calvin* is pleas'd to confess, that this is *terribile decretum*, as being presented to the World with a face of terror, or indeed 'tis rather *cruentum decretum*, a most bloody Decree; as if Gods Laws, as *Draco's*, must be writ, and become legible in characters of blood and rume. And now at last, that this fore-mentioned Author in his third Book of his *Institutes*, Chap. 33. should so unreasonably, and so unjustly affirm, that the Almighty



mighty did fore-know all this, because he had so ordained it by a positive Decree; as though his Decree were the cause of the Divine Prescience, which must needs be in nature the antecedent, and so his Decree become the consequent of it: For the Divine Determinations do really and necessarily presuppose the Lords fore-knowledge thereof. Yet here the *Geneva* Doctor does seem to bring a Salvo in the fore-quoted Books and place of his; for he expressly sayes, *We should not be ashamed to be ignorant of some of the nature of divine Predestination*; which I really perswade my self he was altogether of. *Eusebius* fully declares to us in his second Book against *Sabellius* the Herctick, *That it is an argument of great sloth and idleness, not to seek into those things, whereof we may justly make inquiry.* So on the other hand, it is a piece of great insolence, to be too inquisitive into other more mysterious truths; all which should deter the most curious persons to make too large excursions; since we have set and fixt bounds to our knowledge. So that we must not break into the Mount of God; as in *Deut. 29. 29.* where *Moses* tells

tells us, that *secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things that are revealed, belong unto us and our children for ever*, to this very end that we may *do all the words of his Law*. Now when the Scripture speaks of such things, as God would not have men to pry into; it wraps them up in night and cloud: But here we have a clear light of this truth; we have all the imaginable evidences of Gods mercies to repenting sinners shining in the Gospel; and God hath given us the most real and comprehensive discovery of his Goodness to all, in that he would have all men to be saved; and certainly our finite conceptions fall far short of the infinite mercy designed, and as freely tendered in Gods sacred Word to the whole race of Mankind: And though we cannot by the Clue of Natural Reason unwind all the intricacies of Divine Providence in order to the eternal salvation of men: yet it is an egregious piece of weakness obstinately to reject all such Divine Truths which we cannot fully comprehend: yet some will confidently pretend, that they can arrive to a clear understanding of the Doctrine of Absolute Election;



Election ; which is indeed far more mysterious than the contrary assertion : For how can God execute his fierce wrath on those , who have no way provok'd him to it by any actual offence , as the *Supralapsarians* fondly surmise : So that plainly to condemn to misery and destruction, whom the Lord will , is the argument of the resolute wilfulness of a Tyrant, rather than the lawful sentence of an impartial Judge, who does not act by the bare Prerogative of his Power , but as it is attended with Goodness and Equity. And shall men then make God, who is the Father of Mercies and of tender Compassion, become as cruel as *Nebuchadnezzar*, to cast his Children into a Fiery Fornace, when they have done nothing evil , or that deserves that punishment. The Lyon (tho' enrag'd with hunger ) would not devour poor *Daniel*, and would such persons have the Lord to shew his power in destroying us, as *Saul* did his by slaying the Priests? Acts of naked power are no way morally good or evil of themselves , but they truly become so by their due concomitants ; as when they are accompanied with Justice

Justice and Mercy, otherwise the extremity of Power is perfect Cruelty. Thus some in the World are pleased to represent the Almighty, not as the most mild and tender Father, but as a mighty *Nimrod*, who makes it his business to destroy and worry his creatures for delight and pleasure. Now such men look only on God through the glass of his Power and Absolute Sovereignty, no way beholding him in that of his Mercy: For we must know, that God can as well cease to be, as to be good and gracious; and 'tis unreasonable to affirm, that a Father can delight in the blood and destruction of his own Children; neither can we rationally conclude, that Eternal Goodness made men to destroy them: yet some by a new kind of artifice have found out a way, that the Lord still becomes a Father, though he exercises acts quite contrary to his Mercy. This is a principle indeed contradictory to right reason: for how can a man become truly grateful to a person that hath condemned him to death and destruction? Can any man be tyed in the bands of love and gratitude,

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tude, when he shall be faster bound, and that hand and foot, and so cast into eternal torments? Certainly these very men would not give their ready assent to such a monstrous Opinion, if they did perswade themselves that they were of the number of them, on whom God had pass'd such a severe sentence. For if he should reveal to this sort of men, that he hath made any preterition of them by an absolute Decree of Reprobation, and all to exalt the greatness of his Power; I am induc'd to believe, that these Dreamers in their own particular judgements, would not be very well pleased with it, when awakened with the dread and horror of it. For, Why should God hold forth the Scepter of his Love and Goodness, if under that pretence, he should break frail man in pieces with a Rod of Iron? This way of procedure we should call Cruelty in men, whose goodness is as nothing, but we must not entertain such mean and low thoughts of God, whose goodness is infinite as himself, and so extends to all men. And then, for the Lord from all eternity, without  
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any consideration of the sins and iniquities of the Sons of *Adam*, to love some, and hate others, is a perfect contradiction to his Divine Benignity. God hates no man, till he first hates him. For the Apostles Argument clearly runs thus, That from the same Fountain, as that of his Love and Goodness, cannot proceed bitter streams and sweet. Thus you evidently see, that God himself would deny his Name, and even that of a Father, wherein he delights to make men for ruine and destruction. This were for the tenderness of bowels, to petrifie and harden into horrible cruelty; and the Sun-shine of his Mercy, to be turned into colours of blood. And shall the Lord then by his pure and naked Will, decree men to eternal death, before they have enjoy'd any part of life? And must punishment be fatally ordain'd, before any sin is committed, or any kind of transgression perpetrated? This is an Inference plainly illogical; for this makes the Consequent precede the Antecedent, and so perfectly confounds the very order of Nature, that the Effect should go before,

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before, and antedate the Cause. And can the Almighty have a more immediate aspect on the punishment of his creature, before he hath cast so much as one glance or look towards their iniquities; (the sole and meritorious causes of Divine Judgements, and the just revelation thereof)? This must needs condemn then the vain and ridiculous Hypothesis of the *Supralapsarian* Doctors: Neither can it be admitted as a safe Maxim or Truth, (which is impudently alledged by some) that unconditional reprobation is the effect of Gods absolute and uncontrolled Power and Dominion over his Creatures, (the workmanship of his own hands) because God hath now tyed and obliged himself by the Laws of his Gospel, and hath firmly indented with us in his Covenant of Grace and Mercy through Christ, that if we obey his Evangelical Commands, in our sincere practice of them, we shall undoubtedly reap and taste the blessed fruits of his Promises in eternal life. Now if we cannot perform the Divine Precepts, why were they given us? Was it only to upbraid our weak-

weakness and impotence? or to reproach to us our sad and miserable fall? No certainly: they had a higher and a nobler end; which was to direct, and as forcibly to engage us to be holy in all manner of conversation.

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## C H A P. XXII.

22. **A**ND now I shall proceed to shew to you, that if there is any Absolute Decree past in the Eternal Councils of the Almighty, what need is there then either of Gods Precepts or Promises under the dispensation of the Gospel? As the one commanding our obedience, and all Christian duties; and the other, to give encouragement to the due performance of the same. So that the maintaining of this pernicious Doctrine of irrelative Decrees, claps fetters and bolts upon our leggs, that we cannot move, nor stir one foot in the way of our Christian race. And pray how can we be said to go in the paths of Gods Commandments, if we have not the liberty of our Souls and Wills to do it? And here let us duely consider, what was the design strictly to prescribe duty, and to give divine Injunctions, and to annex a penalty to the

the non-performance of them, if it is not within the compass of our power no way to do, or obey them? What can we be the better for our blessed Saviours Righteousness, if we are constrained by any peremptory Decree, not to take or lay hold of it? And what benefit or advantage can we make of the exact copy of Christs wonderful Piety? If our hands are so firmly tied and bound, and all our possible endeavours obstructed, that we cannot any wayes transcribe it in the uniform holiness of our lives? So that the assertion of this kind of Predestination, is the most dangerous Rock that can discover it self, upon which multitudes must needs dash and split themselves, and thus finally sink into eternal misery and ruine. Now certainly, nothing but good can come, and proceed from an infinitely good and gracious God: So that I think Mr. *Calvin's* Followers now must acknowledge, and as freely confess, that Gods fore-knowledge, or fore-seeing does not lay any constraint on the will of man; neither does it infringe the liberty of it, as I did at large before demonstrate to you, That as man did enjoy the freedom of his will in the



state of perfect Nature before the Fall, he may then be as reasonably allowed the liberty of his will by Grace, which is since the Fall. And this is that whereby we do co-operate with the divine Assistance and Goodness; which power and ability every person may be presumed to have, or else our Saviours death was ineffectual and altogether vain and to no purpose: For if righteousness by Christ does not meerly consist in the Almightyes imputation of it to us, but also in our actual application of it our selves, and that by faith; from whence is immediately deriv'd our ready conformity with our Saviours life, and that in a due submission to the Law of Gods Grace; which if we have not a power to obey, neither *è converso*, on the other hand, have we a power to disobey; the liberty of the will now does not consist and stand *in equilibrio*, in an equal poise or indifference to good or evil, as *Adams* did; but it inclines rather to the one side than the other: and though God be affirmed in the Scripture, *to work in us the will and the deed, of his own good pleasure*; yet here we must understand, that the will is Physically ours, and the

the deed is also ours, but 'tis Morally Gods; for otherwise we must be concluded to be dead in the humane nature, as well as in that of sin and iniquity; Besides, there cannot be a will in Man created *de novo*, by which we become obedient to Gods Evangelical Commands; it must then be necessarily granted, to be by a will renewed by the powerful influence of Divine Grace. And this somewhat appears, by that severe objurgation of Gods Holy Spirit in the Psalmist, *Psal. 32.9. Be ye not as the Horse and Mule, that have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle*: So that our sinful natures should be curb'd, which know no restraint of themselves; for if we are left to the violent sway of our unruly and insulting lusts, we must needs run wilfully and headlong upon ruine; as 'tis plainly and familiarly exprest by the *Horses rushing into the battel*. So that we must fully know, our will is not really destroy'd by sin, but only deprav'd; and that it is at length rectified by Gods Grace, which is the most proper and effectual means of our restoration, (as Physick is presum'd to be to an infirm and diseased body);



body): for though we are naturally but as Dry Bones, yet God can quicken them by his enlivening Grace, into a state of active duty, and ready service of him. Now as in the Plague, or any Epidemical Distemper, the Disease is in its nature alike destructive to all persons; yet it admits of a Cure in some, by reason of the timely, and seasonable, and right application of Cordials: but on the other hand, it becomes incurable in others, by reason of the neglect of the use of Cordials: So that the Contagion does by the Spirits corrupt the humours, till at last it make a body of death. Now Original Sin, which is the great Disease of the Soul, is alike curable in all men, if the blessed Comforts and Cordials of Divine Grace and Mercy be with due Care and Regimen used, and as soon applyed. But if by reason of the neglect of this, the Poyson does propagate it self into infinite actual sins in all the faculties of the Soul and Body, it is very easie, and it lyes even to the lowest capacity, to apprehend and conceive, how ineffectual and vain the application of these Remedies to some must be, rather than to others;

others ; which no reasonable person can charge on the prescribed Means, or the Physician , but solely on the man himself : So that as the Lord cannot be entitled to any mans transgression ( as some too audaciously declare ) thinking thereby they may sin with authority ; so neither can the fault be transferr'd on the Means of Gods saving Grace, no more than the bare and meer Apple in Paradise could be the efficient cause of Mans Fall, who became lyable to the Judgement and Curse denounc'd on the eating of it. For if *Adam* had kept the solemn pledge of Abstinence, the fruit it self had been as good, as of all the rest of the Trees in the Garden ; yet you plainly read and discover, the very act of eating did bring men into a state of misery, and so indeed into Hell ; and not by any alteration or changes of place, but of the man himself, when he did begin to hide himself from God ; that was the folly of his shame, the close palliation of his sin : For *Adam* had not lost God, but lost himself in God : For we are in him by Grace and Bliss, but out of him by the Curse, and the effects of it in misery.



misery. So that *Adam's* nakedness was not the real want of Cloaths, but of his lost Innocency. From hence it cannot be conceiv'd, that the Almighty in his infinite Goodness can be wanting in any thing to fallen Man, but he is truly to himself, in not living answerable to the special means of Gods Grace and Goodness: yet it must be confess'd, that there was in the Infinite Wisdom of the Creator *aliquid latentis justitie*, a real signification of his Divine Justice, by reason of Mans disobedience by his Fall, whereby under a temporal Curse, was implied, That poor Man must work out his own salvation with fear and trembling; which if he did endeavour after, and that by the assistant Means of Gods Grace, then 'tis most evident, that the generation of Man, after a temporal death, should be restored to an estate of eternal life in glory through our blessed Saviour. And if *Adam* had never laps'd, but continued in obedience to the Divine Institutions, he should have been undoubtedly translated and advanced to an everlasting Paradise. Thus we may easily conclude an absolute necessary obedience, from the constant

stant analogy and purport of the Divine Scripture ; and then what will become of the Doctrine of unconditional Reprobation, the Principles whereof are so destructive to Christian practice, since true Piety of life is totally obstructed by them? For, 'tis plainly evident, that it is not a bare naked faith can obtain salvation for any man, but such a one as does and can justify it self to be truly lively and vigorous; and that by bearing the fruits of good works : which does most eminently appear, in our due and constant conformity to the life of Christ; and by which we are firmly united to God again, and that by our sincere obedience, from whom we are separated by the Curse, and that by reason of horrible disobedience. So that as the life of our blessed Saviour was truly exemplary for all faithful Believers to copy out, so likewise it did carry a plenary expiation for all, who shall endeavour to own his life in the sanctity of theirs. And upon this account Moral Obedience is as well Evangelical, as truly Legal: So that our Saviours Precepts, which were truly exemplified in his practice, were the doctrinal



doctrinal Sermons , of which every true believer is to make a ready application in his pious conversation. For we are not properly said *Credere in Christum, nisi confitendo in vita Christi* ; that is, we make the most solemn and declaratory confession of our real belief in Christ, and that by the true Religion of our lives and actions. For Christianity is justified and acknowledged in nothing more, than in our sincere and universal obedience. And all that some Sectaries, and the greatest enemies to Christian Religion can bring in, and alledge against us, is, that we enervate the force and strength of Christs Doctrine, by the negligent performance of the duties enjoyned in the Gospel, which clearly discovers it self in the remissness of our lives : So that in this manner there is an absolute necessity of evidencing our real faith, by the effects of good works. For justifying faith is not only a convincing perswasion in the heart of the Historical Truths of the holy Scripture, neither (as I have at large shewed in my fore-going Discourse) that saving faith is a meer acquiescence in, and dependence on God, for his imputation

tion of Christs Righteousness, and the Merits of his Passion to us, but it is an inward conviction in the conscience of our defections and failances from the Divine Law; which act does as soon beget in us a zealous emulation, and that in a just imitation of the life of the blessed *Jesus*; and that we are so far accepted of God for Christs sake, as we can offer up our selves obedient, from a real consonancy with our Saviours most pious example. And that we are, and shall be so far partakers of the benefits of the death of Christ, as we are truly said to have of the life of our Saviour. So that one part of his satisfaction, was not only to expiate for our bare duties, but for the defects thereof in the irregularity of our lives: and then it must be granted, that *credendo agere & agendo credere*, is the truest Motto of every good Christian. Thus then by what methods or arts is it possible, that the bold Predestinarians can so happily reconcile their too confident hopes of Heaven and happiness, with the horrible filthiness and fordid pollutions of their lives? and for men to continue so much Swines, as still to chuse the Mire and Un-



Uncleanness, rather than spotless Purity and Holiness of Conversation, since none but the pure in heart shall see God, and become partakers of that Beatifick Vision? How shall such men be accounted to follow Christ in the regeneration, which is the evident effect of the energy or working of Gods Spirit in the Conscience, and which is such an union with Christ, that it quickens a man in a life of true Grace and real Piety? Now how this great work of Regeneration or the New Birth may be effected, seems obvious, and does plainly appear: For when the goodness of God which was exalted in the Sphere of Mercy, for the Redemption of lost man in the Wisdom of his secret Will, then the Lord was pleased to institute a revealed Will, to which men must become exactly obedient, that so the Almighty may by mans submission thereunto, carry him through all obstacles and difficulties to the good intended him; and which he shall assuredly receive and taste when he hath prevailed with man, and so brought him to a ready compliance with his declared Will in his constant practice of it. So that you may evidently

dently see, that Gospel Obedience is naturally and necessarily the foundation of all true happiness, deriving from Divine Grace: For as the most skilful Mathematician cannot work his 'Scientificall demonstrations on every person that receives his principles, by reason he cannot make some men capable of understanding of them, and consequently to apprehend the true Conclusions thereof: So indeed neither can the Lord by the Means, the Principles and Doctrines of Grace, bring every man to a spiritual and saving knowledge of himself, by becoming subject to his revealed Will, and so to seal his faith in Christ, by his actual and ready obedience thereunto; and thus to be in a capacity for Gods good Spirit, the co-operation whereof, will firmly strengthen and propagate a mans faith by his works, according to that of S. Paul, 1 Cor. 3. 11. *And I Brethren could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ; that is, of such who were in a capacity of spiritual things, and of spiritual knowledge: therefore S. Paul sayes, he fed them with milk, and not with meat; and he subjoyns the*

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reason of it, *for hitherto they were not able to bear it*: that is, they had not as yet attain'd to that so high a perfection in Christianity. Now some there are, who will alwayes be carnal, who will never arrive to this soft and ductile capacity, and malleable temper, to receive the lasting impressions of Divine Truths; and as God can reach the effects of the demonstration of his infinite love to man in Christ Jesus, to all such, as he can bring to a right apprehension of, and as clear a perception of the same; when as I say, he can bring men to a capacity of understanding the principles of saving Grace; all of which is not, neither can possibly be effected or wrought in a man at his first initiation or entrance into Christs School by Baptism, but by farther continued instruction in hearing Gods sacred Word effectually preached, and as convincingly prest on a mans Conscience: so on the other hand, the Almighty can never bring some to a willingness to embrace the Means of his Grace, in the due Vertue of preaching them; and so rightly using them: all which does not derive from any fatal and peremptory Decree of Reprobation,

bation, but from mens very Natures and perverse Dispositions, since a sad pravity of Nature hath prevailed as far on some persons, as a senseless stupidity hath on a Mathematicians Pupil. And this is the reason of the evident effect of the working of Gods Spirit on some men, and not on others; and of the clear demonstration of his Grace on their Consciences; which is commonly known, and likewise exprest by the name of Regeneration, or of Gods particular calling of them, which is in a diverse way and manner wrought on several persons, yet still dependent on the Means of Gods effectual Grace: So that I presume, no man will attempt to set down the very time and minute, and the exact and critical point thereof in their real conversion to God; or infallibly discover the manner, and the certain effect thereof, but only the Supream and Omniscient God: but a man himself, and also others may do this conjecturally from the blessed effects in the soul; and that truly manifested in a life of Sanctification and stricter Piety, than in the former management of it. And here I shall endeavour



vour to illustrate this great truth to you, by a familiar instance: For the diseases of the soul being comprehensively understood, in the corruption and pravity of mans nature, they do hold an analogy and correspondence with those of the body; as then some distempers are recoverable by the right use of the prescribed Means; and others are, and do become irrecoverable, by a careless neglect of them. Now the vertue of those Means directed to, may be long delitescent, & lye hid, according to the strength and predominancy of the disease in various bodies; yet the exertion of the sanative vertue does shew it self at last in bettering the state of the Patient; and that in order to a recovery of perfect health: Such is the joynt working of Gods Spirit with the proper Means of Regeneration or Conversion in persons capable of redemption. The power and specifical vertue of the helps of divine Grace may in like manner be clearly discern'd at last in the great work, and in the recovery of our souls, in the regeneration of our hearts, which becomes truly visible in our lives. True Christians may, like some Trees, stand a long time at a stay,  
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and not seemingly thrive, let the Gardiner be never so industrious in the use of the means; so that the smallest Trees, as well as the greatest, and most promising ones, may shew forth their growth by their equal thriving; and many of the weakest Christians of the meanest abilities, and the smallest natural endowments, may as truly grow and fructifie in Grace as well as others, and all in order to eternal glory: I say, they may by their reasonable service of God, according to their several capacities, justifie their faith in Christ, by the agreeableness of their lives with his most Divine one, so as to be made partakers of eternal salvation, as well as the most eminent and greatest Saints, who have all along improv'd their faith, by their constant obedience to the Rules of Christs Institutions, which is attested by the integrity of their wayes in all Christian Vertues; all which does very forcibly demonstrate, that *quoad Deum*, as to God, we are all in a like capacity of salvation by our blessed Saviour, as being no way hamper'd or fetter'd with the Chains of any inviolable Decree of Reprobation; but we may, as to the



Almighty's part, be made free by that Christian liberty, by which Christ hath made us so. For the Divine Mercy working in patience in the possible conversion of men, does often shorten the hand of his Justice, so that if the Redemption or real Salvation of any indefinite man were altogether impossible *ex parte Dei*, as to the Lords part; which certainly would be so, if he hath decreed it, and so irreversibly excluded them from mercy; why then should the Lord so passionately complain of mens obstinacy, and their horrible perverseness, and what untractable natures he hath to operate upon? and to use the greatest incentives to duty? *Tiberius Caesar* having a design to put both the Sons of *Germanicus*, *Drusus* and *Nero*, to death, he did use several artifices to draw them on to revile him, that so by their bitter invectives against his person, they might receive condign punishment by a sentence of death; which horribly fallacious method, the Historian tells us, was an argument of great and notorious hypocrisie in the Emperour. And certainly, if the great Potentate of Heaven and Earth hath appointed men by his absolute Will to inevitable

inevitable destruction, who does not barely entice ( as the Devil does ) but decreeth that they shall offend , that so they may incurr damnation by those impieties he decrees , and so draws them into ; this would betray far greater unsincerity in the Lord with the Sons of Men, as to destroy his Creature under the specious pretence of Justice, for those very sins he hath appointed and determined, as the necessary means of their ruine. Now certainly, God will never inflict punishment on a man, for that which he ordained him to effect ; and the instrumental cause can never be blam'd to act that which the principal one moves him to : But after all, if Divine Clemency will not prevail with men, then for God to give up such to their viler lusts and desires, and so to fill up the measure of their daring sins and provocations ; this would be but what is truly just and reasonable, yet the Almighty does not effect this neither, by any implicit Decree of dereliction, or total desertion of them : but 'tis only as the ripening of an impostumation to be let out and evacuated by the Lance of his sharp Judgements. Now on the other hand,



if the salvation of any persons were absolutely necessary, and truly unavoidable, Why should God use the great advantages of Grace in the Gospel, in the preaching of his Divine Word! In the *foolishness of preaching* (as some term'd it) in the formality of rational inducements, since the means tending thereunto become vain and superfluous, where men are carried on to the end by an inevitable necessity: And besides, no man can be properly said to be the owner of those acts of Devotion and Piety, which are done on him, and not of him. For, if a man hath not the least power of his own Will, he is meerly passive in all; and he is no more than instrumental in what he acts and does. And in this manner it may be safely affirmed, that the Lord does reward himself, and not the man, who becomes truly passive, doing nothing, if he produceth the effect in the man, without the man.

CHAP.

C H A P. XXIII.

23. **N**OW this Assertion is plainly contrary to the tenth Article of the Church of *England*, concerning Free-will, which runs thus. Wherefore we have no power to do good works, without the Grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will. From whence it may easily be inferr'd, that the Grace of God indifferently works all the good that is in every man, or can be possibly wrought in any one since the Creation : So that in this sense, the power of the Will is not perfectly free to any man since the Fall, in any supernatural act or way. But yet God's mercy is equally free, and that to all men (which the violent *Sublapsarians* do deny) Where then are the close em-palers of the Church of God ? and that by a strict Predestinarian line ?  
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since the Gospel must be enlarg'd, and preach'd to all Nations before the second coming of Christ to judgment. This commission our blessed Saviour did give to his Disciples, which you may see, at large in the sixteenth Chapter of *S. Marke*, and the 15<sup>th</sup>. Verse, *and he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature, capable of it in the whole Creation.* From whence you may clearly perceive, that the Almighty will extend, and likewise indulge the blessed means, and helps of salvation in the Gospel, and that to all sorts of men. But after all that hath been said, I plainly foresee that some may object, and as readily affirm, that my whole business of proof is nothing, or at least not fully satisfactory, so that I have seem'd to have beaten the Air, and my Discourse hath been built all this while on an erroneous Principle: For there are none that God hath predestinated to eternal Life, but they are from all Eternity ordain'd to the use of the means conducing thereunto. Some persons imagining that Gods Decrees may be like the Pillar of Fire, enlightning only  
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the Elect, the true *Israelites* in the way of their earthly Pilgrimage ; whiles the rest of the World become mere *Egyptians*, who are encompass'd about with Clouds, Darkness, and Confusion : Now the Pillar of the Cloud did carry in self both light, and darkness, which did become light to them that had eyes to see, (that is) that were the Elect, but perfect darkness to them which had not eyes, or did not come within the compass of Gods Decree of being sav'd. I answer first, as to this case, that similitudes carry no real probate of truth along with them, they are but as Casements to administer a more plentiful Light, whereby things may become more visible, and conspicuous. Secondly, in this instance, here is a very signal demonstration of the Lords miraculous Power, and Goodness towards his own people, of his own enclosure, from the rest of the unbelieving World which did lie in common ; here was indeed, a more special exertion of God's gracious Providence to the *Israelites* ; for they had been long enough under the oppressions and groans of *Egypt* ; that yoke was now become galling, and  
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very uneasie to their tender necks, so that here is only a declaration of a Temporal deliverance ; and of the rescue of Gods children from the hands of violence, and fury, by a miracle of Divine Goodness, procuring speedy relief, and succour for them, which might also be typical of an entire freedom from the least servitude in the Land of *Canaan* ; all of which did not derive from any absolute Decree of the Almighty, but from the tenderness of his pity, and compassion towards his own peculiar ones, the *Israelites*. Thirdly, this so seemingly plausible Argument, may be quickly retorted, for the case is quite different since God hath discovered, and hath made the Doctrine of Salvation by Christ under the Gospel, shine forth as clear as the *Sun* in the Meridian ; and he hath enlighten'd the world with the perfect knowledge of it. For under the Oeconomy of the Gospel, God hath fully indulg'd the means of Salvation to all men ; and then consequently upon this supposition of mens using the means of Grace aright, they may become partakers of everlasting life. To this it may be as soon replied, That  
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some men do not make a due and right application of the means of divine Goodness through Christ. I answer by way of Concession, That all men may not be improv'd by the enjoyment of the means from a life of Grace in order to that in Glory ; and some may feel the effectual power of the Gospel in their hearts, in the renewing of them in the beginnings of a new and spiritual life, and others may not ; yet this does not proceed from any peremptory Decree of Gods, but only from the greater prevalency of sin, and the incorrigible nature of man : this I say is deriv'd from the wretched pravity, and impiety in men, joined with their sadder obstinacy ; or else mankind would not hold out so long against the tenders of Divine Goodness : if it were not for innate corruption strengthening it self with the concurrent aids of actual Rebellion, men would long before have surrendred their Souls upon the overtures of Grace, and mercy, and the proposals of Gods infinite Goodness to them through Christ. Mr. *Calvin* himself does really acknowledge, that 'tis from mens refusing Gods Grace, which



Will in his sacred Word ; for we have now a natural inability to perform Gods sacred Laws, and Commandments. I answer first, by way of Concession, That the Rational Creature did lapse from created Perfection, and that the Lord did in his infinite Prescience fore-see the same, and that Man would degenerate, and so fall from walking according to his prescribed Law of life, and that God also did clearly perceive the miserable consequence of this so sad an Apostasy ; for after Man's Fall, he had only the dead letter of the Law, in which he could of himself only read Duty, Sin, and Judgment, for the Law did shew him, and us our Wound, but did never administer a Cure. So that now poor impotent Man, did want the co-assistance of the Spirit of Grace and Life, to enable him to do his duty ; which did chiefly consist in an obedience to Gods sacred Commandments : and this may be observed by the effectual concurrence of Gods Grace under the ministration of the Gospel, and which may be obtained by the prescribed means of saving Grace ; not that there is in the second place, any absolute, and  
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compleat keeping the Divine Precepts, and Commandments, but only such an observing of them as the Gospel does enjoin and require, and as Christianity does oblige, and bind them on us. So that it is altogether vain to expect such a power now as to preserve us from all transgression of the Moral Law, that perfect Rule of life. Yet the very Heathens from the common assistance of Gods Grace, have went a great way in the observation of the Divine Commands, many of them becoming agreeable to the dictates of right reason. And so they did become correspondent to that great Law of Nature written and engraven in every mans heart. For we shall find that the Moral Philosophers, who were the Divines of the Heathens, the preachers up of natural truths, did very fully acknowledge in their writings, that what strength and ability they had, did derive its original from God, and so they did place it in the natural liberty of the Will. For, to what end and purpose should the Almighty give men powers, and natural faculties, if not to employ them? these talents and excellent

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which does evidently presuppose there is in every man a real power to embrace it ; for God forces none to good, neither does he necessitate any man to evil, but is indeed still pressing by his holy Spirit, the means of Grace and Reconciliation with him , all which are new, and continued acts of Gods infinite loving kindness to mankind. Now the liberal hand of the Lord held forth by *S. James*, is open to every man, he cannot want the waters of life, that comes to the fountain of living waters ; 'Tis but *ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find forgiveness, and knock, and the door of salvation is opened to you*, the emporry, or storehouse of divine Bounty, is set open to all under the dispensation of the Gospel, 'tis *come and buy Wine, and Milk without money, and without price* ; the favours of royal bounty are not to be purchas'd, but humbly to be petition'd for. For now a real gratitude is all that the *King of kings, and Lord of lords* does expect, or a Subject truly can pay, all of which should be discovered in the sanctity of our lives and conversations. What proportion then can the retribution of an handful  
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of Gumms, or of a Hecatombe, bear to any of Gods mercies? when indeed, the very Blessings, the Sacrifice, and our selves, are all his, *who is all in all*. If then our thankfulness is all that we can return for Gods innumerable blessings, and 'tis well Gods Grace can work this in all men; for a grateful resentment of benefits does seldom spring, or grow from the ground of a bad, and evil nature: however where it does, by this minute and poor offertory, we plainly declare, we are very indigent, and meer beggars at the best; and this does evidently discover the Divine bounty, and benignity, and our bounden duty, which consists in still petitioning the Almighty, yet we must know, that Gods Grace is free, even when by a sacred violence we impetrate his Boons and Blessings, and which we so passionately importune him for; the return of a grateful souls prayer, is not as the just payment of a due debt, but meerly the reward of Gods Grace and mercy. But here it may be urg'd, that we cannot pay the obedience which is due to the Almighty, which does principally consist in the living up to his revealed Will



Will in his sacred Word ; for we have now a natural inability to perform Gods sacred Laws, and Commandments. I answer first, by way of Confession, That the Rational Creature did lapse from created Perfection, and that the Lord did in his infinite Prescience fore-see the same, and that Man would degenerate, and so fall from walking according to his prescribed Law of life, and that God also did clearly perceive the miserable consequence of this so sad an Apostasy ; for after Man's Fall, he had only the dead letter of the Law, in which he could of himself only read Duty, Sin, and Judgment, for the Law did shew him, and us our Wound, but did never administer a Cure. So that now poor impotent Man, did want the co-assistance of the Spirit of Grace and Life, to enable him to do his duty ; which did chiefly consist in an obedience to Gods sacred Commandments : and this may be observed by the effectual concurrence of Gods Grace under the ministration of the Gospel, and which may be obtained by the prescribed means of saving Grace ; not that there is in the second place, any absolute, and  
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compleat keeping the Divine Precepts, and Commandments, but only such an observing of them as the Gospel does enjoin and require, and as Christianity does oblige, and bind them on us. So that it is altogether vain to expect such a power now as to preserve us from all transgression of the Moral Law, that perfect Rule of life. Yet the very Heathens from the common assistance of Gods Grace, have went a great way in the observation of the Divine Commands, many of them becoming agreeable to the dictates of right reason. And so they did become correspondent to that great Law of Nature written and engraven in every mans heart. For we shall find that the Moral Philosophers, who were the Divines of the Heathens, the preachers up of natural truths, did very fully acknowledge in their writings, that what strength and ability they had, did derive its original from God, and so they did place it in the natural liberty of the Will. For, to what end and purpose should the Almighty give men powers, and natural faculties, if not to employ them? these talents and excellent



endowments, if not to improve them ? For not only *Arrian* upon *Epictetus*, and *Hierocles* upon *Pythagoras* his χρυσὴ ἔκκ, *Golden Verses* ; but others have as unanimously affirm'd, that the gods have put it into the power of every man not to fall into those evils, ( that are really such ) or into the greatest which are vicious ones, that assault the nobler part of man: And *Seneca* the Philosopher tells us, That Nature hath so advanc'd the Soul by its innate faculties, born with good, tho' with common Principles, which, if vain mortals do not wholly relinquish will infallibly bring them to perpetual happiness, so that what power soever they did allow to the natural liberty of the Will of man, they did still confess, that they did receive the same from an infinitely good and gracious God. Nay, some of them went higher, for they join'd the necessity of the Divine concurrence, to their own natural abilities ; for they alwaies implor'd from the Divine power, a sound mind, as well as a firm and active body, a fit building for the Soul to inhabit in, and to exert its due and regular operations : So that you may  
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easily see that the refined Heathens did acknowledge the superintendency of Divine Providence, and a real necessity in sustaining those things in their operations which Gods hand had made, and much more man in his actings, who was the Master-piece of his Creation: and further, some of the Moral Doctors did instruct men in this Notion, which was more than a Philosophical Essay, yea rather an Axiome truly Divine, That the gods did preserve men from evil, and that by removing the baits, and the temptations to it, and also to incline them to good, and that by some certain suggestions, and inspirations, and especially, from the greater prevalency of the examples of others. The effects whereof have become very visible in several persons famous in History; as in *Julius Caesar* beholding *Alexander's* Image, setting his foot on the Globe of the World, he presently breaks forth into an upbraiding of himself, in the contemplation of *Alexander's* great and innumerable Conquests and Victories; whereby he was inspirited to prosecute greater attempts, and so he did incessantly thirst after such Achievements.



chievements which might raise Trophies to his memory (if possible) equal to those of the former; and the Trumpet of fame did so loudly proclaim the glory of *Miltiades* his Victory at *Marathon*, that it did so allarm *Themistocles*, whether from a vertuous emulation, or the incentives of a Dream, that it would not permit him to enjoy his sleep, till he had raised a more glorious Monument for himself at *Salamine*. And lastly, I might propose to your serious consideration, one more sublimated Principle of the Moral Philosophers, which is this, That they did attribute the liberty of the Will, by which they supposed all good things to be effected, to the sole gift of the Divine Powers. πάντα γὰρ ταῦτα θεῶν βοηθῶν δέονται, (that is) That all stand in need of the helps and assistances of the gods. But now under the Divine Oeconomy, or administration of the Gospel, there is a greater proposal of advantage than all the precedent acts of the Heathens can make any pretence to, which is the assistance of Gods special and Evangelical Grace, and supernatural aids of Gods Spirit, which none of the  
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meer Moralists obtained the certain benefit of : Now this saving Grace of God does consist either in the right disposition of the human Will, or else in the production of those good inclinations ( the Will being renewed, or advanc'd by supernatural grace ) does enjoy thus the Grace of God in some measure co-operating still with the Will. Now if we do not admit of these so reasonable Positions, we do manifestly take away the necessity of the holy Spirit of Grace his coming into our hearts ; we unjustly subtract from his more peculiar office, by whose powerful concurrence, and kind influences we are perswaded to all holiness, and uprightness of conversation : there being an indispensable necessity of the mighty Grace of God, and the more eminent prevailing power thereof. So that here I must confess my perfect dislike of those Heresies, and tares which were sown by *Pelagius* in the Field of the Church, and which were justly condemn'd in several Councils at *Carthage*, and *Milevis*, who did ascribe too much to the liberty, and freedom of the Will, so



as not to admit of Gods Grace to be necessary to the production of true and real acts of piety : such men singing *Io Paen*, and the lowdest Holannahs to our humane nature ; certainly these men did never once hear of the sad fate of man in his lapse, neither did they feel that inward bruise which was received by the Fall ; and this made them advance the powers of reason so high, and erect Trophies to its Victories. Now bare and single reason can never be sufficient to maintain inviolable the peace of our minds ; when storms and discontents, these earthquakes, shake us, it cannot compose and heal the fretting disquiets of the soul : naked reason can never calm the rage of our turbulent passions , or dis-enchant the insulting fury thereof : yet it must be granted, there may be some Essays proposed from the dictates of right reason, in order to so blessed an end, but they must be higher improv'd by Divine Grace. It must be therefore by the grace of Gods Spirit shining through the darkness of our corrupt hearts, whereby we are enlightned in  
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the right way that tends to a supernatural state of life in future glory. Since the whole nature of man is too sadly deprav'd by the impiety of our first Parents ; for we are all poyson'd in the very root in *Adam*. Now as the readiest way to cure Poysons, is to take Cordials into the stomach, which will by their prevalency quickly eject its contrary, which is venemous : 'tis only by the operation of true and Heavenly Grace , whereby we do expel the fatal malignity of sin and evil. Now since this Gospel gift , true Grace is in God's power alone to confer it, which does jointly work in men in the most effectual manner, and in what degree, and measure the Almighty pleaseth ; therefore we must from an undeniable consequence believe, and be as fully perswaded, that this Divine Grace, must be obtained by those directive means the great God does, and hath appointed under the dispensation of the Gospel. So that now the result of all will be this, the absolute necessity of seeking the Lord's saving and supernatural Grace , and help in a constant way, and practice



of all Christian duties, which he hath prescribed to all men under the Gospel, and in the due performance of which the Almighty will be certainly found of us. For as in secular affairs we stand in need of some pledges of duty, and civil communion, as the best means and expedient to preserve both truth and right: as namely, for instance, the Seals and Rents affixed unto, and exprest in the evidence, or in the Instrument whereby a Tenant holds his Estate from his Landlord, in which he gives him the honour of suit, and service; and the Landlord on the other side, does oblige himself for his Tenants protection, and safety. Now this instance runs truly parallel in sacred things; for it is as necessary we should hold our eternal inheritance purchast by Christ by such firm seals of Grace, and rents of duty as may assure and confirm his truth and right, who conveys and transmits the Estate, as well as the just right of him that receives it, and hereby the Tenant does appropriate the Promises to himself. And so God very forcibly argues the same in *Mal. 1. 6.* there he asserts his

his right of Worship in those reciprocal pledges of Honour and Homage between him and his Creature, *If I be a Father saith the Lord, where is mine honour? if a Master, where is my fear?* If this title belongs to me? Why is not my Jurisdiction as a Father, my power as a Master acknowledg'd in a due submission, and a ready obedience to me and my Laws? So that now you may easily discern that it highly concerns us humbly to implore the abundant aids, and helps of the Spirit of God, from whence his peculiar grace and ability is deriv'd to us. For we must not think to sit down and consult our own ease, and so securely lean on a fancied soft and easie predestinarian support and Cushion, all which brings upon men as great a stupidity, and senselessness of their real duty, as of their wretched and miserable condition; for such men unreasonably pretend to an infallible assurance that their very negligence, and sloth, and horrible carelessness will never frustrate the great end of the Divine Decrees. Now how fatal and malignant an influence such desperate Prin-



Principles are apt to have on mens practices, is too manifest, and visible. Let us therefore be timely awakened with a lively sense of our duty, and so up and be doing the same.

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CHAP. XXIV.

24. **A**ND now I shall fully evince to you, that the Position of unconditional Decrees, does take away and frustrate the very end of our Prayers, and Addresses to God : for it weakens the very strength of our hopes of prevailing with God thereby for mercy, in the remission of our sins ; it so loosens our joints, and does so much remit our Christian vigour, that we cannot as *Jacob* did, wrestle with God, in this great duty of devotion, and so overcome him for a blessing. Indeed before the Fall, the Religion of Man was only, and purely eucharistical, a continued act of Praise and Thanksgiving, the exalting the soul in the return of thanks to God for his miraculous mercies ; then praise was the *ἀκμὴ* or perfection of service in the Primitive state of created Perfection, so that petition afterwards did naturally find out the way to implore Divine



vine mercy : before, Man did know no want of a petition, neither did there need any thanksgiving for the ready supply of a defect when there was nothing wanting to perfection; there was not then in that first State any news of Salvation, by reason there was not the least need of it ; and there was no necessity of a Preacher to perswade men into a full belief and knowledge of God, when Man did know nothing but God, and goodness : Then I say in that first blessed condition of Man there was no want of a Divine to reform a depraved Will, or to rectifie an erroneous Conscience, or to enlighten an Understanding darkned with clouds of Errour, or involv'd in Mists, and Doubts : All these solemn offices, and necessary duties were as prescrib'd remedies, as supposing some latent or known disease in Man to be cured. For Prayers are alwayes made on the presumption of some exigence or want, but Man at first was not sensible of any ; so that this act of petition does naturally derive from real imperfection ; all which does readily enforce the practice of this duty of devotion. Now to what purpose should we pray,  
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*that Gods will may be done on Earth, especially that Will of his Commands, in a due obedience to them, if we have not the power to perform it? or cooperate with the assistance of Divine Grace in order to the doing of it? But that we may, I shall clearly discover to you from the freedom the Will is now invested with, as also from the various wayes of Gods perswasions, and methods of his Grace, which the Lord does all along make use of to bring our Wills into a full compliance with his own. For Gods Grace in its proper nature is truly sufficient to this end, however his Grace is not so irresistible, so as that we cannot any way oppose it, for it is irrefragably concluded from the consent of the Schoolmen, that the operations of Gods Grace in a mans heart, may be really obstructed, for Gospel Grace, and divine succours superinduced, have not always workt the blessed intended effects thereof; how very frequently hath the Grace of God been rejected and all to embrace a darling sin, or a beloved corruption? For it is not now so strong, and prevalent as to force its passage; neither does it carry in its nature so great*



great might and violence, as to commit a rape upon the soul, to force our consent. The Spirit of Grace does not come now in a mighty rushing and impetuous mind, as to drive and hurry men on headlong to their duty. Divine Grace does not make such invincible assaults on the stubborn and obstinate Wills of men, and make such an onset and breach, as will force it to surrender its consent: Neither does the good Spirit of God under the Gospel irresistably compel men to embrace eternal happiness. For God knows, we do too often make a repulse against the blessed operations of Gods Spirit, and his Grace on our hearts. How often do we put this winged emblem of peace and mercy to flight? Now in this case the Almighty will be as firm in his sacred resolutions, against us: as we can be resolute in our voluntary and cruel rejections of him, and his Grace, that his Spirit shall not alwayes strive, and struggle with stubborn and perverse Man. These things being premised, and which must as well be granted, I shall demonstrate to you more at large, that the Doctrine of absolute Decrees, is

is altogether inconsistent with our very duty. For it does impede the efficacy, and exercise of our diligence in the due practice of our devotion towards God. But here it may be urg'd, how comes it to pass, that the prayers of righteous men in their intercessions with God should so powerfully prevail for the diverting of his Judgments from the wicked, as it evidently appears from righteous *Abraham's* earnest expostulation with the Almighty for *Sodom*, as in *Gen. 18. vers. 22. But Abraham stood yet before the Lord*; where you may observe, that this Prayer is exprest by the very posture of his Body; and which carries a greater remark, that God does not cease to answer *Abraham's* importunate suit, till he desists from his prayer and pleading, and the prevalency of his entreaties: so that it may be probably conjectur'd, that not only ten persons, but five, nay a less number might have prevail'd for the saving that incestuous City; and we also read in the 20th. of *Gen. v. 7.* where we have Gods word to *Abimelech*, an express Mandate from Heaven to restore *Abraham* his Wife. For 'tis there said,  
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He is a Prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live, (that is) he shall atone thy guilt, he shall stand up, and pray; fervent prayers being the best and strongest banks he could make, and raise to prevent the overflowing of Gods wrath, the waves whereof were coming rowling upon *Abimelech*, and his whole Family; for 'tis said expressly, *If thou restore her not, know thou, that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that is thine.* Now all this could not possibly be, if there be not an especial, and peculiar favour clearly shewed, and signally exhibited to persons Predestinated, and Elected by a Divine, and as absolute a Decree. I answer, That the Lord hath firmly oblig'd himself in his sacred Word, by his assured promise set down and made in *S. James, Chap. 5. Vers. 16.* *That the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much,* *καὶ ἡ ἰκετη* (that is) that the supplications of the righteous carry a kind of Omnipotency along with them, for they tye Gods hands from Judgments, and as readily open them to mercy; the Saints of God getting a nearer communion with him by multiplied acts of devotion, and by

by this they do highly intend and advance the most glorious Attribute of Gods mercy and clemency to mankind, otherwayes the daring and monstrous impieties of men would in time have been matur'd, and ripen'd for Judgment; yet the Almighty's Goodness and Benignity does many times stay, and turn the hand of his vindictive Justice, from falling heavy on evil mens persons, so that the evident effects of the divine Bounty, the greater largesses of his kindness, these endearing essays of his love: I say, they have had so great an influence on some persons (though very obstinate, and horribly vicious) as to make them better, and to improve them, and to bring them into a condition of good men by true repentance; we have a clear instance for this in *Exod. 32. 10.* Where when Gods wrath like a violent torrent, did come in a most impetuous manner upon the *Israelites*, by reason not only of making, but worshipping the Golden Calf; *Moses* then did stand up like a strong Sea Bank opposing the violence of the Waters, turning the stream of Gods indignation another way. For the Lord was

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coming in a storm of his Judgments for their horrible crime of Idolatry. *Moses* by his prayer quickly obtains a calm, the sweet, and pleasing, and still voice of God in mercy and goodness. So that in this manner, by the invincible power of devotion, the Lord is miraculously prevail'd upon, either to retard, or finally to divert his imminent Judgments. Now this blessed effect is not produc'd from any absolute Predestination to this great grace, and mighty power of intercession with God by a secret Decree ; but 'tis only from the greater advancement of Gods glorious mercy and goodness, by these means and helps of grace and favour with him, though in some cases, the most importunate prayers of the righteous, and most upright, will not become effectually prevailing, where iniquity is grown to that height of malignity, and desperate sinfulness, that God must necessarily judge it, or cease to be himself. For he openly declares in *Ezek. 14. 14.* *That though these three men, Noah, Daniel and Job, were in it, and so stood up before him, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness.* This triumvirate of  
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Favourites in the Court of Heaven, shall only obtain audience for themselves ; their ingeminated intercessions for others will become altogether fruitless, and ineffectual. But here it may be replied, That though there be no special singularity of divine favour in conferring his Grace, yet it may be entailed on the persons of the faithful and righteous ones, who are Predestinated by a positive act of Election in the secret purposes of God ; so that some too confidently affirm, that the controverted Tenet of Absolute Predestination, may be firmly built on those remarkable Texts and places of Scripture, where the assured promise is made to *Abraham*, not only for temporal, but eternal Blessings, not only in giving his Seed the Land of *Canaan*, but a confirmation of a better state : As in *Gen 12. 3.* *And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him, that curseth thee, and in thee shall all the Families of the Earth be blessed.* I answer, That these gracious and ample promises of God cannot be any probable argument to conclude, the truth of the Doctrine of irrelative Predestination, for they are only a Prophetical de-



claration, and the clearest manifestation of Gods love and goodness to *Abraham*, and his ensuing Posterity. All which was principally intended for a fuller confirmation of his Faith, and greater encouragement in a life of grace, and that from Gods infinite prescience of his real belief of the divine promises, which *Abraham* did fully evidence in the uprightness of his conversation, and walking with God, whereby God did plainly foresee, that *Abraham* of all men in the world would become obedient to the calling of his divine Grace, so that the Lord should make him the great instrument of his glory, in laying him as the firmest foundation of the Oeconomy of his Church, and so truly making him the Father of the Faithful, according to what God pronounces expressly of him afterward, as in *Gen. 18. 19.* *For I know him that he will command his Children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do Justice, and Judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham, all that which he hath spoken of him.* So that indeed, Gods gracious calling of *Abraham*, did not imply any rejection, or  
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positive reprobation of the rest of the world; no more than of divers Candidates for a preferment, the best deserving, or whose merits overpoize, is chosen or elected, the rest are as capable of advance in the like kind, as their demerits shall equally suit, or fit with it: For the Almighty does call every man in the world in one kind, or another, according to a mans capacity of co-operating with his Spirit of Grace, though the said call be most evident, and becomes more visible in the blessed effects of Grace wrought in the Members of the Church of God: So that every man may obtain salvation, as well as *Abraham, ex parte Dei*; as, to the Almighties part: for every man may be made a Son of the Church, though every one may not become a founder of the order, the Father of the Faithful. Thus you may easily discern, that the promise of Gods miraculous mercy, was made to *Abraham* out of his pure love, and infinite affection to him, and not from any partiality in Election, from any secret occult Decree. For the Almighty did evidently perceive



that his great grace to *Abraham*, would eminently beget true grace in him, and that his divine love towards him, would equally produce the grace of true Faith, and a ready trust and affiance in God, and so consequently be the occasion of his closest communion with him by a life of Faith, in the works of true righteousness: For *Abraham* believed in God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness. From what hath been so largely discoursed of in the case of *Abraham*, I might also produce a clear argument for the liberty of Mans Will, which we have so full an account of in *Gen. 22. 1.* in Gods tempting, or rather due tryal of *Abraham's* faith; and that by the most signal act of obedience. For there could not be a more convincing testimony of his union with God by faith; than when he did so apparently shew forth, that he did infallibly believe in God above the strength and meer dictate of his Reason. For it was a strange duty which even nature would startle at, that the Lord should lay his commands on *Abraham*, to sacrifice his only Son *Isaac*, to whom he had made  
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before an assured promise, *That in his Seed all the Earth shall be blessed*: But now *Abraham* remembering and duly reflecting, that he obtained his Son *Isaac* from the Lord, and that by a Miracle; he fully relied on God, that he would make good his promise by an equal successive Miracle of his mercy to him. And therefore *Abraham* did justify his to be a true faith by a ready obedience. Now that the real performance of this duty did depend on the freedom of *Abraham's* Will, is clearly manifest; for there was no force, neither the least coaction of his Will, for it was no way robb'd of its present liberty by any necessitating Decree of God; However he did know in his divine prescience what *Abraham* would do, otherways the temptation of offering up his Son, had been but a snare, an argument of meer delusion: therefore the Lord did use this particular means of tryal, more powerfully to intend and confirm *Abraham's* faith in him, and his promises; whereby he might become capable of Gods multiplication of his future Blessings



on him, and that by endearing him to himself by this high, and sovereign act of sound faith. For what would he not trust God in and for, who would obey him in this, in the Sacrificing his only Son, in the dividing himself from himself, the tearing of one part of his bowels, and that with his own hands, from another (the Son being really the most tender part of the Father)? Well then, now you may clearly see, that Gods especial predi-  
 ction of the state of *Abraham*, and of his whole Family in relation to his present, and future life from the eternal fore-knowledge of God, was not, neither could it be, the proper efficient Cause of the consequent events and issues, no more indeed than any man, who foreseeing, and thence foretelling a showre of rain, can be truly said, or denominated to be the principal cause thereof, when it comes and descends on the Earth: Let us not therefore be *like silly Children*, as in *Ephes. 4. 14.* *tossed to and fro*, fluctuating in our opinions, and *carried about with every wind of Do-*  
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*Strine*, or violent blast of an Enthusiast, and all by the sleight and cunning craftiness of men, who are very accurate, and methodical in this subtle art, *whereby they lie in wait to deceive*, and that with dangerous errors.

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CHAP.

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## CHAP. XXV.

25. **N**OW the ill & pernicious consequences of this Doctrine of unconditional Decrees, are too well known, and evident. For in this Chapter I shall fully declare to you, that it renders all Gods solemn exhortations to obedience, through the whole current of the sacred Scriptures altogether fruitless, and vain. For this is the promised effect of his divine power in *Psal. 110. 3. That the people shall be willing in the day of power*; which fully discovers it self in our ready submission to Gods holy Laws, and Commandments. And now can you entertain a belief of our blessed Saviours designs in the Gospel? was it to upbraid us, or indeed to instruct us, when he commands us, *to learn of him to be humble and meek, and to be, (as in Matth. 5. 44.) therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect?* which we can no way possibly be, when

when a superiour Decree is past, sign'd and seal'd, to the contrary. What did all our Saviours Precepts mean, and so many weighty admonitions to make our Calling and Election under the Gospel, firm and sure, and that by the strictest rules of Piety, and a Religious life? Were they all intended to expose our weakness, and inability to do it? and pray what was the end of Gods Promises, if not to spur us on, and to enliven us with strength, and Christian courage in our way to happiness? If they were intended other-ways, than instead of exciting, and earnestly provoking us to good works, this were to beat us down, and to lay us flat in an utter despair of any. And this is the readiest way to cast the soul into a trance, a stupefying amazement, which it does certainly effect, if it gives a man no other prospect than of eternal misery; if so, then all the most powerful persuasions that occur in the sacred Scripture to a holy and pious life, undoubtedly would be vain, and unreasonable, and truly inconsistent with the infinite Goodness of God in the purport of our Creation, as well as of our Redemption. How can we  
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imagine that the Almighty should propose infinite rewards to Grace and Vertue, if we are not in a capacity to obtain them? Why should our Saviour being gone before us, cry aloud to us all, *To be followers of him as dear Children*, as *Ephes. 5. 1.* if we cannot move one step in the way of Obedience towards him? Or can we rationally conjecture, that the Promises of the Gospel (which are the greatest incentives to an upright life) should be only temporary, and so become the sole priviledge of the Age, wherein the Disciples of Christ did live? or that the force and vertue of them should not descend to future Ages of men, and so reach to our times? And must these promised Favours of Heaven and Mercy, cease? and become extinct with the first Professors of Christianity? and so their Posterity shall not reap the least benefit by them? certainly the unspeakable Blessings of Heaven, comprehended in Gods gracious Promises, were not confin'd to one Family; or those *sacra deposita*, or rich Legacies bequeath'd only to twelve principal Men, or a set number of other Disciples

ples under the Gospel. This is to have Mercy promis'd, and prefac'd with ruine and misery, and thus for death eternal to us, to become legible in the Book of life ; but we are fully assur'd by a firm word of Gods sacred Promise, that everlasting death and destruction shall seize on none, but only on the impenitent, and disobedient to the prescrib'd Laws of the Gospel. Gods Mercy then must not be contracted into too narrow a compass ; for must the Gospel which is the enlarged instrument of the Divine Goodness, the clearest Patent of his Royal Favour, and the firmest conveyance of his love to Mankind ; I say, must not that run in as general terms, as the design of the Mercy was universal, when the *habendum*, to have, and to hold the Blessings of the Gospel in the sacred Promises of eternal Felicity, are extended to all men, that are willing, and so become fit to receive them ? For God does not except, or debar any from coming to him, *that they might have everlasting life*. So that we may with a modest confidence approach his Throne of Mercy : for we may purchase, & obtain Heaven *without money,*



*money, and without price ; for the Divine Mercies are not Merchandise, but free Grace, and as frankly offered, and tendered to all men. Must Heaven then, this blessed estate, be settled only on the first-born of Christians, in the beginning of the Church, in the infancy of the Gospel ? And must we expect no portion of Gods Grace to make us capable of Heavenly felicities ? For Gods arm is not shortned, neither is the hand of his Mercy and Bounty less open'd, and extended than it was before, and that to receive all into the sweetness of his embraces, that live in a due submission to his sacred will on Earth. Let us then stir up, and quicken ourselves, and so not neglect our own happiness, by entertaining any undue apprehensions either of God, or his Mercy ; or that any are infallibly decreed, irreversibly determin'd, not to have, or enjoy the great largesses of Gods Bounty and benefits in the Gospel. 'Tis very strange, that men should set up a fatal Decree as a flaming Sword ; which as it did turn every way to our first lost Parents, so it should have the same use and office as to us, to keep us from the way that leads*

leads to eternal life. Then the greatest industry will signifie no more, than the extremest ill husbandry ; and though a man is never so indefatigable, and takes the greatest pains to obtain Heaven, yet if not decreed to it, he shall reap no real advantage from all his toil and labour ; To what purpose then should we war, and fight against sin and vice, ( the most hostile enemies of our souls, ) and overcome them, and their force, if we shall not receive the honour of a triumph ? Must not success, and victory be rewarded with a Crown, and that of eternal Glory ? must the very fight imply a defeat ? and the Conquerours Sword be no more esteem'd of than the vanquisht ignobler overthrow ? *bella geri placuit* ? And thus must poor Man be unhappy in his success over his insulting and tyrannous sins, as well as in the defeat : which certainly will be so, if there shall not be a future retribution, and reward conferr'd on them that labour for it. Now the contrary Doctrine is cried up, and admired only by the violent suffrages of such, which own and acknowledge themselves to be of the

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Consistory of *Geneva*: Now if it be so, why then should the holy Scripture represent the duty of every Christian under such phrases, and expressions which do at once both encourage and crown our greatest industry, as by a race, with the assurance, if we run it with diligence, we shall receive the most glorious prize: and so the condition of every true Christian is illustrated, and familiarly set forth by a Combat, That if we manfully fight against all our spiritual enemies, we shall not fail of an eternal Crown, not of a corruptible one, saith *S. Paul*, that fades away, as those lessers ones were amongst the *Romans*; but with one that bears a perpetual spring, which does flourish with a never dying, but an increasing verdure. Why then should any Sect of Men contend for the fiercer way of absolute Decrees? For the Council call'd at *Arles*, against the desperate Heresie of the *Pelagians*, did denounce several dreadful Anathema's against any Opinionist that shall presume to affirm, That a man that does finally perish, could not have been saved; and in the *Valentine Council* at  
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the latter end of the third Canon, there are direful Curses thundered out against such men, that unreasonably maintain that Men are Predestinated unto evil, so that they cannot be otherwise. Inſomuch that in this caſe, ſin and its concomitant puniſhment muſt become unavoidable. Now upon due reflection, and conſideration, we ſhall find and diſcover this Opinion labouring under great weakneſs and imperfection; for the Doctrines of Holineſs, and Meekneſs, might as well be preach'd to Wolves and Tygers, as to Men, if they are inevitably wicked: now as the one is not capable of underſtanding the divine Precepts, and Commands; ſo is not the other of performing them, if any Decretory ſentence of the Almighty is paſt to the contrary. 'Tis much to be admired, that ſome Men in the world, ſhould perſuade themſelves, and others, that God is more ſevere, than truly merciful; 'tis ſtrange, that men ſhould ſtudy to find out inevitable ways of being Damned, and that Men ſhould be ſo ſollicitous to have the Vail drawn away from the face of divine Goodneſs and Mercy. That Men ſhould be ſo

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earnest and truly desirous to behold the angry countenance of the Almighty, that he should appear in storm and fury: I say, that men should be more delighted with the dismal noise of Thunder, War, and Terrour, than with the glad tidings of Peace and Reconciliation with God through the blessed Jesus: Must the Lord always speak from Mount *Ebal*? and shall not the most inviting charming voice be heard, and become audible from Mount *Gerizim*? would such Men have God appear with all the attendance of wrath and fury towards themselves? and why therefore should he towards others of a different persuasion in this point from themselves? Lastly, I shall wind up all by declaring my perfect averſation, and dislike of the Hypothesis, both of the *Supralapsarian*, and *Sublapsarian* manner of explaining Gods Decrees: as to the former, the proper object of it, is *homo nondum conditus*, not created; to consign Man to eternal Torments, before he is made, is to decree, to inflict an infinite evil on a guiltless and innocent creature: for being not made, and so not capable of acting; he cannot

not deserve everlasting punishment, for no penalty or judgement can injustice be inflicted, but in relation to some fault and crime. Now if God should condemn to perpetual punishment, those that are truly innocent, as having not committed the least impiety, then he would become the Author of more Evil, than ever he was an instrument of Good to them. For the giving of life, the indulgence to Man of a Temporal Being, must needs be esteemed a lesser Good; as on the other side, to inflict on Man an eternal punishment, must needs be concluded a far greater Evil. Now Secondly, as to the other way of the *Sublapsarians*, of appointing Man to endless misery, (as being fallen in *Adam*) and so lying in *massâ corruptâ*, in the corrupt mass of Mankind. Upon this account, I presume, that Person in his 61. page of his Animadversions on the Learned Dr. Heylin's *Quin-quarticular History*, is too forward to challenge any Man now living, to shew that either Mr. Calvin, or any one leaven'd with his Principles, did venture to affirm in Print, That God did decree to inflict Damnation on any Man, but for



sin: When *Calvin* affirms, that *Deus reprobat quos vult*, that the Lord doth reprobate whom he pleaseth, using that familiar instance of the *Potter's having power over the Clay*; here we must know that *S. Paul's* similitude must not be understood by *S. Austins*, nor *Calvin's* Commentary. Thus you see 'tis evident from the *Geneva Doctors* words; That it is not sin and impiety, but God himself that becomes the absolute Reprobator of men. And the fore-mentioned Author does plainly contradict himself, when he defines Reprobation to be a denial of Gods Grace, and to consist in a preterition of some certain men, whose impenitence the Almighty resolves not to cure. Certainly this assertion must needs be contrary to the Principles of right Reason, and 'tis repugnant to the very tenor of the Sacred Scriptures; for if the act of Reprobation is only the withdrawing or withholding of Gods Grace, needful for the avoiding of sin and wickedness; This Position does include an absolute necessity of sinning against God; for, from the withdrawing of divine Grace, Sin and Impiety must needs be-

become the consequent ; for the Sun by withdrawing its light, occasions darkness. Now the violent opposer of the Learned Dr. *Heylin*, goes higher, very impiously to assert, that there are some men that the Lord hath not put under an obligation to repent ; which words indeed, are no more in effect than to set up two contrary Wills in God ; since his revealed Will runs, That *he would have all men every where to repent* : which declaration must be most consonant to his secret Will ; otherwise this is to represent the great God of Truth, to be as false as Man, by using such fallacious pretexts. For the Lord denies his Grace to no man, but to them who too often, and too presumptuously abuse it ; and thereby depriving themselves of the advantages, and benefit thereof ; Grace in the heart here, being an assured pledge of Glory hereafter, the one entitles men to the other, (divine Grace being but Glory begun in the Bud, and Blossom). And the same Authour tells us in the 90. page of his Book, That Salvation, and Damnation, are always (if we speak of the Adult) *secundum*



*bona, & mala opera; according to good or evil works.* Now this is a plain confession of my Assertion, when Election shall proceed from a prospect of pious, or wicked actions: thus Rewards or Punishments being conferr'd on the doing of them.

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C H A P.

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C H A P. XXVI.

26. **A**ND now I shall address myself to all that labour in the Lords Vineyard, in the Ministry of Souls, it should be their great concern and especial care to draw men off from their weak pretences to, and as vain imaginations of, any irrelative Decrees; they should not propagate such malignant Doctrines, which diffuse Pestilence and Death, and too sadly emitt and send forth the effluvia's of Contagion, and thus insensibly corrupt, and destroy the very vital Spirits of Religion in true holiness of life. The Ministers of the Gospel should not entangle men in Thorns and Briars of intricate disputes, in the perplexing subtilties of the Schools: But they should set men at liberty, free from doubts and scruples, to walk in the easie and plain paths of Christian Duties, in the knowledge of facile, and



accessible truths. Divines should not perplex mens minds with meer niceties ; but set them upon the active part of Religion ; they should interdict men from prying too narrowly into the Ark, into the hidden recesses of the Sanctuary, into secret and sealed up Mysteries : For we must not expect to have a clear light of some obscure truths and Doctrines, where the Almighty hath cast over them a shadow and a Cloud : *Apollo-nius Rhodius* reports in the second Book of his *Argonauticks*, That *Phineus* was wonderfully tormented by *Jupiter*, when he attempted to become the profest interpreter of his Mysteries ; hence the afflictions of old Age seised on him, and which was a greater enhancement of his misery and accumulation of his calamities, that he was depriv'd of his eyes, at the same time, *καὶ δ' ἔλετ' ἁφ' ὀφθαλμῶν γλυκερὸν φάος*, and the Lord may justly punish men with spiritual blindness, when they become too inquisitive into sacred Mysteries, and so they may incur that fatal judgment, That *seeing, they should see, yet not understand* ; and no wonder that such vain speculators, like some curious

rious Lapidaries, which do in some competent measure understand the nature of Jewels, yet are many times so industriously intent, and so dote, and dally so long with sparkling objects, that they often lose the benefit of their eyes, the organ thereof, which gives not only the greatest light to the Body, but indeed, life to the Art. *Ye men of Galilee*, why gaze you then into the Mysteries of Heaven, which will overcome you with the excess of their light and lustre? wherefore the faithful dispensers of the Gospel, should with the greatest zeal, and love to the salvation of souls, pursue, and follow men close, and not suffer them to run into inextricable mazes and doubts: thus they should prescribe the great lines, and bounds of duty to every man, and the danger of going beyond them: They should not create new torments to their people by afflicting Controversies. All true Ministers should rather preach up such plain, yet solid Doctrines of the Christian Religion, which do highly promote the power, and advance the efficacy thereof in the holiness of mens conversations. Since the practick  
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part of Christianity is almost destroyed, and swallowed up by the speculative, in the incessant contemplation of high, and sublimer Notions. Yet men may be in the too critical speculation of some Divine truths, like *S. Peter in the Deep*, and if the hand and power of the Almighty, with the assistance of his Holy Spirit, did not timely succour them, they might sink down-right into a greater abyfs of infidelity, and unbelief. So that now though we have no key that opens into the secret recesses of Christian Religion, yet we may be admitted an entrance into the knowledge of the most necessary and saving truths, which may become more advantageous, and truly useful to us all. For all men are commanded, and should be awaken'd by Gods louder Calls, to make the most diligent enquiry after the true knowledge of our duty, and that by a strict search into the revealed Will of God. We should not therefore espouse such dangerous opinions, which many men have made no other use of (as you have heard at large in my former Discourse) but only as an *Asylum*, and ready Sanctuary for their  
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horrid sloth and laziness to have recourse unto: for the Doctrine of irrelative Decrees, does make men sing a *requiem* to their souls; and most men are lull'd fast asleep in carnal security by such fatal charms, and this makes men become like *Solomon's* Sluggard, folding up their hands very securely in their own bosoms, in the careless neglect of their Christian duties, & their greatest concern under the blessed administration of the Gospel. For truly, men may become good, if they will make a right application of the means of divine Grace and Goodness, to make them so. And the most dangerous and inveterate diseases of sin and vice, may be easily cured, if we would use the proper remedies prescrib'd in the divine dispensatory of Gods word. For the all-sufficient merit of the Sacrifice of Christ, is freely offered, and as readily tendered to all men under the Gospel; and the infinite virtue thereof, does consist in the proper and effectual application of the same, to the end that we may be healed of our Transgressions. Now the nature of our Redemption by Christ, is plainly set forth to the most vulgar appre-



apprehensions by the Catholick or Universal remedy, which is said to cure all the Diseases in the body of Nature by overcoming them, by corroborating and strengthening the essence thereof in danger to be dissolv'd; now the suffering of our blessed Saviour, with the specifick vertue thereof, does import the same cure, his merits being truly analogous, and carrying a similar correspondence with the fore-mention'd remedy whereby a man endeavours to keep a due conformity with Christ, by universal obedience, and by this effectual application made by Faith; Almighty God brings every man in, and he may so continue in a state of salvation, and that by an active life of Grace. For no man is cut off from the Covenants of Gods Goodness and Mercy, by the hand of Divine justice; but only such who do violently oppose, and so do not actually perform the conditions of that blessed Covenant of Grace, as in *John 3. 16.* ἵνα ὅς τις ἀγαπήσῃ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ. *So God loved the World of Men, in this very manner he did give us the greatest argument of it, the giving his only Son, that whosoever should believe in him, should not perish, but*

but have everlasting life. So that the general purpose of divine Goodness, is, to make all partakers of eternal salvation by Christ, by a firm and real belief in him ; without any positive determination of any particular persons either way, but as they are truly Believers. For that, our Faith and Repentance are the respective qualifications in the Divine Prescience, in intuition and consideration of which, we are truly Elected of God. But some men will never be induc'd to believe in Christ, and so their sins do reach and grow at last to the highest malignity, and thus such men pass with the alike enmity against God with the Apostate Angels ; and so they commence both Fiends and Devils. But now Omnipotence, infinite Wisdom, and Goodness (these three acts of the divine Nature and Essence) acting in the Divinity, *libertate liberimâ*, with the greatest freedom, they did contrive a way, and did find out a remedy to redeem mankind from their miserable estate, to a far better capacity of acting by the means of Grace, and that in order to eternal Bliss. For, by what we do naturally, we cannot be ad-



advanc'd beyond the sphere of Nature: it must then be plainly confest, that it is by the assistance of divine Grace, that we arrive to, and reach a supernatural end. But now some mens too curious inquisitiveness may prompt them to ask and inquire, why the state of the Apostate Angels is irrecoverable, and truly helpless, as most evidently appears from their continual War held and maintain'd against the Lord to this very day, from the Creation; the Defensive part being Gods Justice; the Offensive one, the Devils Sin and constant Rebellion. Why then could not our Saviour Christ, who is the incarnate Wisdom of the Father, find out a way to expiate, and satisfy for intellectual Spirits, as well as for men (Corporeal Rationals) the former being equally Creatures, and so consequently, might be co-partners, and joint partakers of endless happiness? I answer, among several Reasons alledg'd by the Schoolmen, and the Primitive Fathers of the Church, that Gods Mercy did more peculiarly shine forth, and become more eminently conspicuous in the Redemption of Mankind; and that a  
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particular eye and glance of favour was directed and set upon fallen Man, as the Author to the *Hebrews* plainly declares, *Heb. 2. 16.* For verily he took not upon him the nature of Angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham; so that I presume in submission to more acute and abler judgements, that it is no improbable Argument to evince the truth of this; That there being no generation of Spirits, there could be no Hypostatical union of one Nature with the other, and so to make up an Expiatory Sacrifice for fallen Angels; and now that they being in this condition, they must needs want the means of reconciliation with God, & if Man had not been a *species*, the Humane Nature, being productive of Individuals, which the Angelical Nature is not; how could the second Person in the Trinity have been begotten a sufficient Sacrifice; since all individual Men (till the power of the Almighty did overshadow the Virgin *Mary*) were conceived in Original sin, and so they must consequently be incapable of being an Atonement for the same? and how could one Nature expiate, and thus satisfy for the transgressi-



gression of another Nature? for how can the Humane make the least satisfaction for the Angelick? For though Christ was crucified, yet it was only the humane Nature that did suffer, that was dead and buried, and lay in the Grave; the Divinity of our blessed Saviour being truly impassible. Now for this very reason the fallen Angels still continuing their irreconcilable enmity, who endeavoured to advance their strength, and that by seducing Mans depraved Nature; these Infernal Spirits, I say, are no more capable of the goodness of God, but only of that passive Divine Justice, which is the just deprivation of themselves of that happy estate they too soon did sadly fall from, who by their ambitious aspiring, did wholly subvert themselves. Now the Almighty does vindicate himself in the infinite perfection of his own divine Nature, whereby he does exert his mighty Power, and that by keeping the Devils under the just punishment of evil, who could not be kept in, nor any way reduc'd to the practice of good; and thus the Lord does make them suffer his divine will, when he could not make them to per-

perform and do it. For the Devils from the reflexive goodness of their own created Nature, did flie in the face of the Majesty of Heaven. Hence indeed their created Perfections and natural Excellencies did recoil back with the greatest ingratitude, and the most daring force of insolence on the Supreme Donor of all their wonderful endowments; so that you evidently see that the Apostate Angels did shut themselves out of Heaven, they being cast out for their insulting Pride, and the consequent sin of a high Rebellion. And thus in this very way, and manner, they did become their own Judgment, and that by being out of God, and at defiance with him, and so they did receive a proportionate punishment in an eternity of sufferings; as our Saviour himself pronounces the sad Doom, and fatal Sentence on the disobedient with them, as you may read it in *Matth. 25. 41.* *Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepar'd for the Devil and his Angels.* Now as for the preparation of Hell, I fully perswade myself, it was the work of the Rebel-creature, more than of the great Creator;  
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and Mans sin and enmity against God did beget this punitive act, which was truly consequential from the lapse of these exalted Creatures: for that which we call anger in Man, does wholly take its rise from its proper Object: now this could not possibly be inherent in the true and essential nature of the Divinity, for there are not any passions in God, and there was no Anger heard of, no such thing during the *Hexameron*, or six dayes work of Creation, that we can, or do read of; for at that time, the Almighty did pronounce this Judgement of his Works, in *Gen. 1. ult.* *And God saw all that he had made was good*; neither can we imagine there was any divine displeasure on the Sabbath day; neither can we make any reasonable conjecture for it, unless *Adam* did prophane the holy Sabbath, and disobey'd that solemn Command of not eating at one and the same time, so that from hence punishment does take its rise and commence, and the sad preparation of Hell was occasion'd by this strange act of the Lords, that of his punitive justice, and the fallen Angels must of necessity make their own Hell; since it could

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not but be co-æval with their heavy fall; as the Poets Fable does suggest the Moral, That *Jupiter* tumbling down headlong, *Vulcan* did break two Mountains asunder, and so did make a middle Place for him, he violently falling into a Gulph, or Abyfs of Misery. Now a proper resemblance of a region of horreur, we have plainly discovered from *Luke 16. 26.* where *Abraham* assures the rich man, that there is a great gulph fixed, *μεταξύ ημῶν καὶ μέγα χάσμα ἐστίν τι*, There is a great Chasm made, and occasioned by horrid sin, and impiety, So that they that would have a passage made from hence to you, cannot, neither can they pass to us that would come from thence. Now from hence we may very safely infer what a deplorable condition sin brings Angels, and so it likewise does Men into: and what an increase of miseries this condition of enmity and sinning against God does beget, and as unhappily produce and propagate. So that Hell it self is only Gods necessary execution of the Creatures voluntary act, and the destruction of him into that consequent miserable estate, that indeed being no



more than the compensation of punitive justice, and that by giving, and conferring on sinful Man his own. So that the Almighty can be really said to be no more severe in his unwilling act of Damnation of any individual person, than a just Judge of Assize is for the declarative sentence of condemnation on a guilty person, in which he does not hang the Felon, but only shews how he truly hangs himself. Since there is no sin but which is naturally its own scourge, and all iniquity becomes its own rod, and punishment; so that every criminal proves his own Lictor, and the sole author of his own calamity, & thus brings fuel to encrease the most scorching flame. And this is the sad occasion of our Saviours pathetic exhortation with his Auditors, and not only with them, but with the whole world, *Why they would so violently pursue the wayes of death? and that they would not come unto him that they might have life*, as in Joh. 5. 40. For God hinders none from the use of the means, and that in order to eternal life, and salvation. And lastly, I might here present to you another most cogent Argument, why the fallen Angels could not

not be re-insphear'd into their Primitive blessed condition, because they had their finite, and ultimate perfection in their Creation, which Mankind certainly had not, and so they falling from their first state, did as soon fall from the means too : which poor Man did not, for he was fully assur'd of a support by the gracious Promise of Mercy through Christ, as soon as he prevaricated, and fell from God by disobedience : And since no particular man is debarr'd from the most necessary help of the means of Gods infinite Mercy in the Gospel ; We should all therefore from hence receive the greatest encouragement to declare our Christian Principles, by that of our Practice, and that by living up in obedience to all Gods Commands and divine Laws. Though the teachers of absolute Predestination think it not truly necessary ; for I know, there is a Sect of men in the world, who have, and do entertain an invincible prejudice against Evangelical Precepts, (as being difficult, and almost impossible to be obey'd, and duly submitted to) for this Generation of Men introduce them on the stage of



the World, with a very austere and dreadful face of severity, when in truth, the Commands of our blessed Saviour under the Gospel, do not carry so formidable an aspect, and so affrighting an appearance, as the enemies to them do present them with, when 'tis only fear, combining with a ready prejudice against Gospel Duties, and Commands, which prompts to the greatest dissuaves from a due performance of them. Thus these Mens united prejudices do lay and bring greater impositions and troubles to the soul. 'Tis this makes Christs yoke the heavier, when 'tis not duty, but unwillingness that adds the pressure and the burthen to them. So that the preceptive and purer part of the Gospel, becomes not so grievous in itself, but in the opinion, and prejudicated fancies of men; and the seeming difficulty of Divine Precepts is rais'd, and advanc'd only by the power and force of a vain imagination, so that it is only conceit of that raises blisters, and galls the hearts of Christians, more indeed than our Saviours facile and easie yoke does, since the duties of the Gospel are not so hard to be practis'd, neither are  
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the great Mandates of Heaven so unreasonable, as not to be obey'd, as is so familiarly, and commonly pretended by some, who perfectly resolve to observe few or none. Now the Gospel is the great Magazin of our strength, from whence we may fetch so great Auxiliaries, and fresh supplies of Grace and help, as will easily silence the pretended Plea of Mans disability. And though it must be readily confest, that from the Principles of debilitated nature, we cannot perform all the divine Commands, so that this should inspirit our dull and unactive tempers to persist in those paths, that assuredly lead to the blessed and promised Land, the true Heavenly *Canaan*. We should not therefore call up, and excite fresh desires after Onyons and Garlick, since the Doctrines of the Gospel of Grace, do not forbid any kind of lawful and just enjoyments. Christs Precepts do not deny the regular demands of the appetite, but only its luxuries, and riots; the one, the *Stoicks* even Heathens will inform you, was founded in Nature, the other introduc'd by the Fall, by the sadder depravation of Man. So that the design of the Gospel Com-



mands did not only superadd an excellency, but a greater good to all men. For Gospel injunctions, are the best and fittest Bridles to restrain the exorbitancies of corrupted nature, and mildly to correct its rage, and impetuous fury; for it daily and visibly appears, that the vapours and fumes, that arise from crude indigested loads of meat and drink, do but cloud the clearest intellect, and quite obscure our reason, and bring a dismal darkness and forgetfulness on the minds of men. Nay, they convert a rational Being into a meer Animal, for excess does only feed the Beast, and thus starve the Man. Now the Institution of Gospel-Precepts (the observation of which the Doctrine of conditional Election does require and imply) was chiefly and principally intended to mortifie the insulting power of the flesh, to usher in the due restraints thereof, and not to inflame the sensual appetite, and that by a greater accession of fuel to increase its rage. So that our blessed Saviour did not come to root out the innate Principles of the soul, but to cut off the great and growing luxuri-  
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ances of them, and all to withdraw the heart from the corrupt interest of the flesh; since the byass and tendency of the soul does most incline, and runs violently this way. Now Christian Religion does not in this little Vineyard of the Lord eradicate the faculty, but only abscinds the too numerous exorbitancies and excrescencies of it; the intent is to prune the Branches, not to destroy the Roots: for Christ in the Gospel does not prescribe the cutting off of right hands, and the pulling out of right eyes, but only to divide between mens souls, and their beloved sins, which many times are as dear to them, as the most tender members of their Bodies; for now God expects no Limb, but rather the sin of the soul to be cut off, and no part, but of the Body of the old Man of Sin within us; and there is no necessity under the Gospel of *pulling out right eyes*, but the removing the sinful glances, the irregular and viler motions thereof. And here I may very justly interrogate, why men should gratifie the most importunate cravings of their sensual appetites, more than they do the solicitations of their reason?

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For we may make plentiful observations of the sad effects of the former, in the ill and fatal consequences of intemperance it self. For why should we relinquish sober reasons dictates so much, as to condescend to the suggestions of our grosser faculties? for must the more brutish sensitive part prevail? and thus the Beast absolutely rule and govern the Man; and must we fondly indulge to those viler concupiscences, that are most repugnant to, and become the greatest enemies to the jurisdiction and empire of reason? However voluptuous and too sensual persons seem to be angry with themselves, that they are indeed men, nay, they openly declare their malice to their rational faculty, by their practice, and debaucheries, in so much that they all endeavour by the power of intemperance to suppress it as their greatest enemy, and so to quench and utterly extinguish this innate spark of the Divinity, by the injection of too much fuel, and too great infusions of floods of drink and liquor on it: so that if the voice of the animal and irrational part within us, might be duly heard and hearkened unto, it would as earnestly

estly argue with some men, as *Balaam's* Ass did with his Master; Why dost thou prick and goad me to thy own ruine? why dost thou load me with such a weight of luxury and excess, that I must needs stagger and fall under my burden and heavier pressure? So that not only Gods Divine Law, but that of Nature seems to withstand and oppose us in our too eager pursuits after sin, and riot; for all voluptuous mens lives are rather, the real transcripts of the *Turkish Alcoran*, than of Gods sacred Word, who indeed enjoy their imaginary Heaven here in this World; which is really to be immerst in all sensual impurities and pollutions: and thus such men do form and fancy to themselves such a Paradise, as the *Mahometan* Doctrine tenders and promises to its Votaries and Profelytes; which the most vile *Epicures* delighting in, in this manner do compleat their torment, and their Hell on Earth. Now what hath been discours'd concerning the sad effects of intemperance and excess, may be as well affirm'd concerning other Gospel Commands and Precepts, as such as highly tend to the  
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suppressing of a Spirit of malice and revenge ; which indeed so strict a Doctrine of our blessed Saviour, some men do as vainly explode, they so unreasonably pretending, that this assertion does repeal, and wholly reverse the very instincts of the Law of Nature ; for this does seem to be as many Miracles propos'd, as there be different tempers and constitutions of men in the World : so that it is commonly alledged, That this is a Doctrine very fitly adapted to the pitiful humour of faint and degenerate Spirits, who breath forth nothing but cowardice and fear, whose souls do seem as soon to fly out of their Bodies, as reverberated Air does from the quicker motion of their Lungs. Hence some persons are so confident as to interpret that this Gospel-Law of being humble and meek, is to be really servile and sordid, and thus to bear one injury is really to invite and request another ; this is but to bespeak new wrongs, and fresher assaults of unkindness. Now all this must be acknowledg'd to be the bolder voice of corrupted nature, or rather the weak and infirm arguments of the most passionate and malicious persons, who be-

become so exceeding sensible of injuries, which many times have no other subsistence, than what is deriv'd from a curiously working imagination: for a meer busie fancy will give birth and being to many of them, and this adds Feathers to the Arrows which could not flie, nor penetrate mens breasts and hearts before, 'tis only a meer conceit must inform us that we are really wounded, and deeply injur'd by others ; thus when men do look at the wrong end of a Glasse, they still multiply and add to any thing that looks but like a wrong. So that the malicious man does but spin and weave his torment out of his own Bowels ; he does anticipate his suffering in his very crime, thereby inflicting due punishment on himself, and he unhappily begins his Hell here, by constantly living in the fire & flame: Now the purer Doctrine of Christ, and the mild precepts of the Gospel, must never be esteem'd strict and unreasonable, since they carry the greatest aptitude and agreeableness to, and with our rational natures. And since the very constitution of Man does include the power of reason, as well as that inferiour and subservient one of sense,



sense, we should submit to its sovereignty, and so become obedient to the commands of a Superiour; we should not therefore be drawn away by the violent instigation of sense, and sensual desires, and those pitiful little appetites of revenge, which should rather be diverted, and set against their proper objects, our sins, and desperate iniquities. I might also here present you with the great equity and the strict obligations of the most pure and holy injunctions of the blessed Jesus under the Oeconomy of the Gospel, but I must confine myself to my engaged Province.

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**CHAP.**

CHAP. XXVII.

27. **F**ROM what I have so largely discours'd of, we may quickly discover the great preheminance the position of conditional Decrees hath beyond that of absolute ones: the former does strictly require an entire uniform sanctity of life, 'tis such as does carry the most undeniable obligations to the most regular piety in our Christian course; whiles on the other hand, the Libertines of the Age make use of the opinion of irrelative Predestination, as the most plausible and warrantable plea for the careless neglect of practical duties in the general tract of their conversation. Nay, some will produce this so pernicious an assertion to legitimate the vilest impurities, and to justify the perpetration of the most enormous Crimes; for such is the force of this horrible enchantment, that it animates men on to attempt any thing, and they proclaim aloud, that  
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this saving Doctrine of Saintship (as they term it) will truly consecrate and hallow the foulest prophanations in their lives and actions; nay some in the world presume higher, that their most horrible crimes cannot rescind, or cancel the immutable Decree of Divine Election; so that on the too great confidence of this known Antidote, many now still are, and have been encourag'd to imbibe, and swallow down the most deadly and destructive Poysons and Errors, which yet unavoidably will work their sadder ruine and destruction: for certainly there can be no antecedent decree of the Almighty, that does infallibly seal and consign men to everlasting salvation, thereby to embolden men readily to engage in the most notorious, and vilest practices. For this fatal Tenet does set up, and unhappily erect a quite contrary and counter-discipline to that of the Gospel, as does clearly appear from *Titus 2. 11.* *For the grace of God (that is, the Doctrine of the Gospel of Grace) which bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men, teaching and fully instructing us to deny all ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously,*

*ously, and godly in this present world.* In which last Verse, is included the epitome and summ of a Christians duty, both towards God, his Neighbour, and himself: For, 'tis most evident from holy Writ, in this grand Charter of Gods Mercy, in these records of undoubted Truth, That there does not occur the least clause importing, or any way signifying an immunity from the constant performance of all Gospel duties, neither is there any thing tending in the holy Scriptures to cancel and disannul Gods Commands, or in order to free us from a strict and Religious observance of the same; and here none should lay too great weight on their confidence of their being Predestinated to eternal life, when 'tis so easie to perceive, that their very ground-work will fail them; and so miserably deceive, and betray them at last. For the Devil does cunningly contrive this fatal treachery, thereby to undermine, and thus eternally to ruine Mens immortal souls: Let no Sectaries whatsoever then adventure to turn and become so much Chymists, as to extract a confidence of future happiness out of very unlikely ingredients.

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gredients, and Predestinarian Principles. For if Heathens themselves who did own and acknowledge a Supreme Power, by the very strength of reason ; did live up 'as you have heard in my former Discourse, to their native Religion, and those impressions of Piety they did bring along with them into the World, all which was done in a due obedience to the Law of Nature. How much more should Christians exceed them in the constant exercise of Evangelical Commands and Prescriptions. Now what the Heathens did, it was from the meer instinct of humanity ; and shall not Christians do much more from an enlivening Principle of Divine Grace ? Nay, many of the stricter Moralists, did live so much up to that natural light of the soul shining forth in the Law of Nature, and the same reflected in eminent acts of Heroick vertue, that some learned Men have been prompted to a full belief, that these suffering the severest and most exquisite Torments, nay, Death it self, for Vertues sake, have receiv'd the blessed reward of their actings in eternal Glory. For some of them have willingly laid down

down their lives in a ready attestation of this fundamental Truth, of the Eternal Being and Divinity of a God; and shall such Mens Persons be registered for their most vertuous actions? and have their Names only enroll'd in the Catalogue of Martyrs; Why then shall some daring Christians rashly condemn the purer Heathen for their moral virtues? and yet hope to be absolv'd themselves, and that in being guilty of the worst of Vices? 'Tis strange men should so violently contend for the splendid and glorious Title of being call'd Christians, when they shall appear concern'd in the commission of such detestable acts as plainly denominate them to be none at all. And who are infinitely out-done by meer Heathens in their practices. So that now it may be here urg'd, and enquir'd, what shall, and is become of all those most ancient Heroe's so memorable and famous for truly vertuous atchievements. For they were never under the visible covenant of Gods Grace and Mercy, and so consequently, they were not capable of salvation by Christ. I answer, That our blessed Lord was the Saviour of all



Men, but especially of them that truly believe in him ; and that the infinite Wisdom of the Father, did by the Book of Nature, and the Law thereof written in such mens hearts ; I say he did thereby bring multitudes into a state of salvation, *in virtute meriti Christi*, vvhom he could not bring *sub prerogativâ virtutis meriti*, that is, under the saving power of Christs Merits, which does consist in the due preaching, and as ready hearing and receiving of his sacred Word, and in the due administration and use of the blessed Sacraments : so that it may be truly said, and safely affirm'd of all those refin'd Moral Philosophers, and eminent Professors of virtuous and Moral actions, as our blessed Saviour did pronounce of the young man in the Gospel, That they were *not far from the Kingdom of Heaven*. For indeed the Law of Nature was the Basis and Foundation on which our Saviour himself, and all his Apostles did build, and superstruct the most elevated Precepts under the Gospel ; so that there is nothing enjoyn'd in the one, but what is perfectly agreeable, and consonant to, and with the other. For Christ did not endeavour

deavour to raise a new structure of Principles on the ruine of *Moses* his Law ; he did only design to clear that Glass, that it might administer a more plentiful light, and so it might more eminently discover the least spots and blemishes of our depraved nature ; neither did our blessed Saviour intend to rob his peculiar people the *Jews*, of this Jewel, but he did come, and make it his business only to cleanse it, that so it might sparkle forth its due and genuine lustre, and thus irresistably reflect their several imperfections, and their greatest deformities in their very faces. So that you may clearly see that every mans duty in the almost worn out and eras'd lines of the old Law, was to be renewed, and so carefully preserved under the Gospel, but however with the addition, and greater advantage of new and fresh colours, drawing nearer to the life in the times of the Gospel, where some irregularities were corrected by the milder and more skilful hand of an Artist. For the *Jews* did only doat on the bare and old letter of the Law, so that they did verily imagine, that their outward legal Purifications would pro-



cure them a ready acceptation with God, notwithstanding all their horrible pollutions, and that a Man was not guilty, or could not commit any impurity, but what did consist in the outward act. Whereupon our blessed Saviour does more powerfully press their duty written in the very Law of Nature, as the surest means to perfect the same under the Law of his Grace, in the real practice of Evangelical Obedience. For the duty of man imprinted in his nature, that was blurr'd by sin, and by it did become obscure, might now be far more legible and conspicuous under the administration of the Gospel; according to that of Saint Paul in 2 Tim. 1. 10. *Immortality and eternal life being now brought to light by the Gospel*; that is, we Christians now have a clearer discovery, and a fuller revelation of every one of our Christian duties, than ever the Heathens, or the peculiar people the Jews, were made partakers of; insomuch that it is our greatest and highest concern to make the best use of the means of Gods Grace and Mercy under the Gospel; for we cannot reasonably impute any want in them, or the least defect therein to make

make us everlastingly happy : for if the cordials of Gods saving Grace, do lose their designed effect, the fault is not in the Physician, but only in the stomach of the Patient, neither are the means of the Divine Goodness to be blam'd, or complain'd of, which makes a cure in one person, because they do not overcome the same Disease in another, which only by the Patients Error in not using the prescribed means aright, becomes truly mortal. As no man hath a greater interest in the sin of *Adam*, than another; so the Spirit of God in the Covenant of Grace, does reach redemption as much and as freely to one man as to another : for the Almighty would have all men to be saved, for it is not the power of original, but of actual sin and iniquity prevailing against the blessed means of redemption by Grace, brings and procures ruine and damnation to one person, rather than to another. And now here I might be tempted to enter into a large field of discourse concerning the nature of Original Sin; I shall briefly insist on it, because some have made the Doctrine thereof the unhappy foundation of building the fearful Decree of Gods



absolute Reprobation of men upon; and most of the *German* Divines have thrust this Article of Original sin into all their Systems, and Tracts of Divinity, making it the great support of this new and horrible Doctrine of Gods positive, and absolute rejection of men for *Adams* sin: which said Doctrine was not known for the first Four hundred years in the Church, till near *S. Austin's* time; And this way run the *Sublapsarian* Doctors, doing violence to many places of holy Scripture, and all to countenance, to give credit and reputation to their espous'd Opinion. And when men of these Principles cannot untie some knots, and solve some difficult intricate places and Texts in sacred Writ; they presently flie to the Doctrine of Gods absolute Decrees thinking to remove one difficulty by proposing a greater; but we must here know, That where a false proposition is the ground of disputes, the Process must needs be infinite, unless you can derive it from the Fountain of Error, which certainly must be this, That men become liable to eternal damnation, and so suffer it by reason of that *παλαιὰν συνείδειαν*,  
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that old impiety which was in *Adam*, the first Parent of Mankind. Which is that stain of honour which tainted the purity of the blood of our first Parents, so that their Posterity have suffered an abatement or diminution, till they were restored by the royal Grace in the redemption by Jesus Christ. Now what was *Adams* personal sin, cannot properly be said to be ours. For sin is not the affection of an universal Nature, as the human in *Adam* was; for transgression you know is a breach of some Law, which not the Nature, but individual persons are oblig'd to obey, and which nature of it self cannot break, but only single persons do; *Actiones* according to that known Axiome being *suppositorum*; therefore such men do highly impeach Gods justice, that so audaciously affirm, that the Almighty will, or may condemn millions of Souls to eternal punishment for *Adams* sin; for there was no consent of humane nature to it, but meerly of *Adam*; and where there is no consent, there can be no transgression, because there is no formal act implied in order to it. For the Argument runs thus, If Mankind had any  
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Will then to sin, it was free, or not free? If any one shall say that Mans Will was not free, then he could not possibly be guilty of that first iniquity; for what becomes natural, and so unavoidable, deprives men of the liberty of their Wills: and on the other side, if mens Wills were then free, they might equally discover their dissent towards the commission of evil, the nature of freedom consisting in an indifferency to either extream. If it be replied, That our consent to sin must be taken in by way of interpretation, that our Wills were included, and involved in that of *Adams*; then by the same parity of reason, we must be adjudg'd guilty of all the sins which *Adam* did commit; since we were all in him *tanquam in radice*, as in the root, as in his loins: We should not then entertain such direful apprehensions of an infinitely gracious God, that from all Eternity he should consign Millions of Men to perpetual Torments for *Adams* single transgression: if it were so, we should certainly have had some intimations of this in the Scripture. Our blessed Saviour does not mention one word of it in it, neither does the least beam of the  
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the light of his Doctrine appear in the whole firmament of Gods word, and not one rittle occurs of it in all the four Evangelists. So that the sin of *Adam* cannot possibly be imputed unto us to eternal destruction; for everlasting Death was not at first threatened to *Adam* for his own proper sin, and then certainly the Lord did never decree to assign Men their portion with Devils for that, and no Man shall be condemn'd to the horrid pains of eternal fire, but only such who have prepar'd and brought fuel for the same by their actual transgressions, and all to encrease the flame and fury of it. Besides, whatever we lost by *Adam*, we find a greater advantage by Christ; nay, here the River riseth far higher than the Fountain, insomuch, that whatsoever hurt was done to humane Nature by our first Parents sin, a far greater good is done and effected for Mankind, by the Incarnation of the Son of God; and though the sentence of Death and Judgment, did come upon all men by the offence of one, Almighty God is not wanting in exerting a greater act of royal Grace to Mankind, by the righteousness of another, even



even of the blessed Jesus, *Insomuch, that whosoever believeth in him, shall not perish eternally.* And so S. Chrysostom tells us expressly in his third Homily on the Sixteenth Chapter of S. Luke's Gospel, *That not to know, and so to do the Divine will, and perform the Law of God, (in which words is included the proper and genuine nature of Faith and Belief in Christ)* this only does produce the utter loss of eternal salvation: For it can no way be, that that mans labour should be vain and fruitless, who constantly employs himself, and is still conversant in the exercise of the duties of Christian Religion prescribed in the Gospel. Let us not then too firmly adhere to those so destructive Principles of unconditional Election. For why should men be excited *to run the race that is set before them*, as in *Heb. 12. 1.* if they have not the power and ability to do it? For, if men are bound up by an inevitable Decree, then all they do would be but a piece of industrious folly, and of a painful and laborious simplicity; why then should we regulate our lives by the strictest rules of Piety? and endeavour to live up to all those Doctrinal

nal truths contained in Gods holy word, that come within the verge of our cognizance and knowledge? why should we follow the Precepts to a good and vertuous life? If we shall not be partakers of the rich Promises of the Gospel, settled and entailed on our obedience thereunto? For if God enjoins a duty which we cannot perform, then the propofal is as vain, as the endeavour is fruitless. Why then should we be earnestly exhorted to the keeping of the Divine Law, (which fully imports a due regard to all Gods sacred Commands). Why I say should we be continually encourag'd to aspire after the knowledge of the Lords Will? all which should be exemplified in the real practice of it? if we shall not at last reap the blessed fruit of all, and that in an estate of eternal happiness? Now the Laws of all civil and well order'd Communities and Cities have still Rewards and Penalties annext to them, all which indeed do inspirit and give the greatest strength and vigour to a Law; and certainly then men cannot imagine, that such ample rewards as are propos'd in the sacred Scriptures to allure them to the practice



tice of vertue, and the severest menaces to deter them from sin and vice, that these are only *Mormo's*, meer *Bugbears*, as the other to be but the images of the reality of Gods Blessings? if so, this would create a perfect contempt of all Divine Sanctions, and other well constituted Laws, and so quickly suggest a non-observance of them, and can we entertain a belief that Gods Word and Laws, which have the appendant Promises, these seals of blessings annexed to our obedience, and the threatnings of divine Judgments for the contrary (these indeed quickening the dead Letter of the Law into life) I say, can we rationally suppose, that a Body of such divine Institutions should barely reflect shadows? that they shall present us only with meer appearances for substantial truths and solid blessings? surely no, the miserable condition of the damned in Hell, can speak forth the contrary, and that by their louder clamours from their grievous pain of sense, and loss, by the sharpness of their sufferings, and from the violence of their acute torments in their refusing to be happy, and that by not obeying the  
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the Laws of Christianity, and that by not embracing the Promises, and the repeated overtures of Mercy through Christ. And these poor wretches duly reflecting on those facile terms salvation might have been once had, and readily obtained; The serious consideration of refusing Gods gracious Promises, and contemning all his Divine Threats, this brings new stings, it infuseth fresh Acrimony into their Cup, it gives a keener edge to misery, and that to wound the soul withal. Now on the other hand, what can we justly suppose should be the great design and end of Gods threatnings universally denounc'd in the Scripture against all sin, and impenitent sinners? For all Gods Menaces are conditional, as well as his gracious Promises are. And the Lord hath plainly propos'd a way, to avoid his most astonishing terrors, and denunciations of his wrath, and that by a quick and speedy turning into the safe way, and paths of holiness and righteousness, which we have too long deviated from. But now where gentle and milder applications will not work their intended effect and cure, sharper ingredients possibly may



may; for where Cordials and lenitives will not prevail, corrosives and causticks many times do: the acuteness of Goads must be exercis'd on Beasts; and terrors, and threatnings must be us'd, where men are become as stupid and brutish; so that if Gods Mercies will not invite, the Menaces of the Gospel may possibly startle, yea at last affright men into Goodness; now what method imaginable more persuasive, and convincing can there be us'd towards rational Creatures, and that of more force and energy, than the Divine Promises and interminations are? so that if some more inflexible tempers of men should be enrag'd by proposing *the terrors of the Lord*, that like as a Cancer in nature, they should be more exasperated by the application of mild and emollient remedies, 'tis a clear and evident symptome, that such are mortified members in Religion; and pray what then remains, but that *immedicabile vulnus ense recidendum*, a gangrene must be cut off, lest it make a Body of mortification? so that there is nothing left to all impenitent and obdurate sinners, but a fearful expectation, and looking for of Gods wrath, as  
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it is sufficiently threatned in *Heb. 10. 27.* For what shall become of the daring and resolved sinner, when the Lord shall appear in a hostile manner, arm'd with the greatest strength and accession of fury, attended with a numerous company of his Judgements? and thus come forth with all the sacred Artillery of Gospel-threats against such men, how shall they be struck with perfect horror and amazement, then the boldest sinner will too sadly experiment, *That it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,* and thus become the sacrifice of his wrath, *who is a consuming fire,* as in *Heb. 12. 29.* 'Tis an infallible symptome of a deplorable estate, when Men will learn no other way the instructions of the Almighty, than by the methods of his fiercest anger, and thus only to read the too legible Characters and Marks of his displeasure and indignation in his just Judgment on them. Now God invokes the most solemn witnesses to testifie that he would not, neither did he ever decree the death and destruction of any sinner, as in *Deut. 30. 19. I call Heaven and Earth to record this day against you; (that is)*



I will produce an undeniable testimony, I will work one Miracle more before you. I will give a voice to inanimate creatures, to speak this great truth, That I have set before you, life and death, blessings and cursings. That I have given you a prospect both from Mount *Eball*, and Mount *Gerizim*; therefore you have a free Option and Election, choose rather *life, that both thou and thy seed may live.* Now since Men hear that God breaks out in thunder by his dreadful terrors, and Divine threats; why should he then propose our Christian duty all along in the sacred Text to be perform'd, and so fully acquaint all Mankind with the very particulars thereof, (wherein their obedience is to be exercised) if they are so impotent and so cripled by *Adams* fall, as not to stir either hand or foot towards the right performance of their duty under the Gospel. Certainly men now are not possess'd with a spirit of infirmity, as the Woman is said to be in the Gospel of *S. Luke*, the *13th. Chap.* and the *11th. Vers.* that as she was, must Man be so bowed together, that in no wise he can lift up himself, and all to walk in the path of  
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Gods Commandments. Surely though he did fall, yet he must not be lookt upon to be in the same condition with persons that are in a desperate Palsie, and so become unable to move a limb; if the Body wants sufficient vigour to actuate its members, it really remains then rather a liveless trunk, than a Body; and if the soul is denied the use of its faculties, it can scarce own, or prove its very Being ( for the Body without the inward spring of motion is plainly dead ) and indeed the Soul seems to be lost, if it does not exert it self in the various actings and operations of its powers, the Understanding and Will, forcibly moving the Affections, which are commonly described to be the feet of the Soul, and so carrying a Man whither he pleaseth. Now if we cannot go one step forward in the prescribed way of Gospel duty, this would be to make our Christian Religion to be nothing else but an exact scene of pure vanity, and to make the nature of Man to assimilate that of Stones, or grave Bodies, to tend directly no way but downward to its Center. If we have no power to do any thing in order to the advancement of our eternal Salvation,



then we are mov'd only as curious Machines, or *αὐτματα*, by anothers hand, or by the force of extrinſick motion, or rather all men do become like the Cœleſtial Bodies which (according to the opinion of ſome ancient Philoſophers) having alſo aſſiſting intelligences to their Spheres, are moved in a conſtant unalterable way and courſe. But now if Man is indued with any liberty of his Will, there muſt be aſſign'd a different *modus*, or manner of acting; otherwayes the violent oppoſers of this truth, will be forc't to confound that commonly known diſtinction in Metaphyſicks, between a neceſſary and a pure voluntary agent, whoſe prerogative it is, to do what it doth act, with a freedom from coaction, and the leaſt violence, as alſo from a neceſſity of immutability; and this is the birth-right priviledge of Man, which conſiſts in an equal poſſibility of acting, or not acting, which only rational agents on Earth do truly enjoy. So neither is Mans Will ſo faſtned, and tied up, and obliged by any Divine decree, to any action, that it is not poſſible for him to omit, or wave it; neither does the Lord propoſe any  
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duty to be perform'd by us in his sacred Will, in order to eternal life, but by the joint concurrence of divine Grace, co-operating with the human Will, it may effectually be done. For our Will now after the fall by *Adam*, in natural actions is as free as ever it was, and it is as really in spiritual ones, when it is made so by Gods Spirit and his Grace. For meer nature could never effect that which is truly supernatural : besides the Almighty did never intend (with due reverence be it spoken) fraudulently to impose on his creature, 'tis impossible, and altogether unbecoming the Majesty of Heaven, to use such weak impostures, neither can we reasonably imagine, that the great God of truth who hath oblig'd, and engag'd his Veracity in his sacred Word, will stoop to take up such servile and fallacious arts. 'Tis the great advantage and supereminent Dignity, this Doctrine of divine Grace, concurring with our Wills, hath above all others of pretended absolute Decrees, in that it tends to a higher, and more noble end in uprightness and sanctification of life. For Gods Grace does kindly



move the Will of Man to determine it self ; and it hath a joint co-efficiency in the due determination of it, besides its proper function of a ready prevention of sin and evil, and as quick an excitation of the soul to good and pious actions. Now the Promises of the Gospel have an immediate eye, and aspect on the performance of all Christian duties, for the sincere practice of Piety does strongly confirm the truth and belief of our Christian Principles. And Gods spirit under the Gospel, making a full exertion of its power, with our joint endeavours, will by its insinuating persuasive force, and Divine assistance, not only work mens hearts to a true sense of, but to the ready performance of entire Evangelical obedience, which is indeed the peculiar office of Gods Spirit of Grace, under the dispensation of the Gospel.

CHAP. XXVIII.

28. **I** Have now insisted the longer on this Topick, or head of Discourse, and all to establish the Doctrine of irrelative Decrees; by reason I would not in any wise come within the least censure or suspicion, to have imbib'd that so pernicious a Principle of *Pelagius*, (to wit) that a man by the sole and regulating power of his own Will and Reason can obtain everlasting salvation; the ready confession of which Tenet, will make the great end of our Saviour's sufferings, altogether ineffectual and fruitless; since eternal life and happiness, is the sole purchase of his All sufficient Merits: let us not therefore be so horribly stupid, *as not to become wise, and that, unto salvation*; let us never divide between the *scienda*, and the *agenda* of, and in Christian Religion, which have such an inseparable union one with the other, for the practice of



the truths of the Gospel carries in its nature an infallible confirmation of the real belief of them all ; and the doing of our duty is the truest consignation to happiness, and the only testimony that God does give us of our Election unto everlasting Bliss ; and that *we are Gods Children by Grace and Adoption*. So that it was an unreasonable and cruel conjecture of the ill-natur'd *Jews*, that no man that had not the impress and signature of the Covenant of Circumcision of the flesh, should be ever admitted to everlasting life (though he were never so Religious and truly devout). Thus as they past a rash censure on others, they vainly imagin'd that they did justify themselves ; so that every *Israelite* by the priviledge of his birth, and being deriv'd from *Abraham's* Loins, should inherit eternal happiness ; that I say, they should become free Citizens of Heaven , and of the new *Jerusalem*. But we must now know and fully understand, that it is not they that are barely of *Abraham's* Seed, but who can produce the fruits of a lively Faith, as his was, shall obtain eternal mercies, and inherit the Promises of Heaven ;

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'tis not they that after the flesh, but after the Spirit, do become the Sons of *Abraham*; it is not to live within the Pa'e, and under the shadow of the Church, but to perform the substantial duties of Christian Religion, that gives us the best assurance of being made partakers of the blessings of it. In the same manner when our blessed Saviour's Disciples return'd from their Embassy, proposing terms of peace, and Articles of Reconciliation, to a rebellious and disobedient World, he found them rejoycing in their great priviledges, and boasting in their external powers, in their having authority over Devils, that were subject to the word of their mouth: but now Christ weighing this in the ballance, and finding the cause too light for so great effusions of joy and transports of mind, He quickly pricks this tumour, and lets out the excrescency and the vanity of it; he diverts his Disciples by fixing their meditations upon the right object, informing them, *that they should rather rejoice that their names were written in Heaven,* as in *Luke 10. 20.* that is, in the Book of Gods eternal Counsels, of the truth



truth of which we have the greatest certainty to be deduc'd from the sanctity and piety of our lives and actions, and this is the best foundation of a Christians joy, which is true, solid and lasting: and as men grow and increase in Grace and Goodness, so they may in a modest hope and confidence of a future happy condition. So that you plainly see that the election of men to eternal life, is truly conditional, being wholly tied and allied to duty and obedience, and if we prevaricate the condition, we must needs fail of the mercies of the Covenant of God in Christ. Let us not then be wanting to our selves, for the Gospel, the effectual means and medium of Divine Grace, still retains its vigour and due propriety to all these excellent ends, to which God in his infinite Wisdom and Goodness hath design'd it, so that the principal reason why the great advantages and helps of Gods Grace, have no better an operation and influence on some men, is this, that it derives from the strength of inbred corruption, as also from that of horrid habitual impiety. For as it is observable in the body of Nature, that from  
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some latent or hidden cause, the proper remedies of a disease, are retarded in their energetick vertue and quality, or it may be are quite frustrated *quoad nos*, as to us; and then the body is at a stand, which at length by the strength of nature insensibly overcomes the cause; and then the repeated use of remedies, may possibly exert their natural efficacy for the recovery of the languishing Patient: now this may be the parallel case of a sin-sick soul, in relation to the saving and spiritual remedies of Gods Grace (they being his sacred Word and Sacraments) which are the proper means prescrib'd by God, which must alwayes be us'd according to his most divine and holy institution, which when they fail at any time in their quickening vertue, and efficacy, it is from some hidden and intrinsick cause, or sin in the soul, and not from any absolute Decree of the Almightyes; yet then the Lord in his infinite Wisdom and Mercy, so works by his saving Grace in the enablements of the soul to overcome this spiritual distemper, as that the right administration of the continued means of Gods Goodness may produce its blessed effects



fects in the final recovery of the soul to a state of Grace, in order to that of eternal Glory, and as there may be divers relapses in nature, the like may possibly also be in a state of Grace, which whether they are, or shall be final in any one; death can only determine of the first of them of the Body, and of the last, none but the great Physician of souls can be an infallible Judge, because he alone can see, and discern the real extinction of spiritual life in any: Let us then unanimously with full purpose of heart, persist in the prosecution of all Gospel duties; and let us readily embrace the Promises of eternal salvation through Christ, which are universally and indefinitely made, and equally exhibited to all men, since the Almighty hath so faithfully and indiscriminatively ascertain'd future happiness to every one that shall walk worthy of it, without the least difference or exception of any; upon what account then should Mr. Calvin make one, and that by interposing the Eternal absolute Election of some particular persons? and he produceth his reason for it in his third Book of his *Institutions*, the 24. Chapter, and  
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the 24. Paragraph, Because God enlightens only some, whom he hath Predestinated to everlasting life. Now this is a very false and erroneous Principle, for the glorious light of the Gospel equally shines on all men; and the same is as universal as the influence of the Sun, which does communicate its warmer Beams to all places, and God does diffuse the rays of his divine Goodness, and the light of eternal salvation to all men. So that the principal reason, and adequate cause of Mans *loving darkness rather than light*, is cleared from Joh. 3. 19. *ὅτι ὁ πονηρὰ αὐτῶν τὰ ἔργα* because their deeds are evil; or the works and operations of their hands are extremely wicked, arising from an evil and corrupt principle in mens hearts, all which is founded meerly in the depravation of Mans nature, and not in any eternal peremptory decree of Gods Reprobation. And now the too rigid Calvinists have set their Wits on the tenter, and their Souls on the rack, and all to invent a new way to patronize the most pernicious errors, and perfect falsities in Religion, and to make their opinions more plausible, they in vain think



think to overpower us with a numerous multitude of quotations from the holy Fathers, and especially from what *S. Austin* declares, who indeed does only direct his arrows and Arguments against *Pelagius* his growing Heresie; but however I could make it evident, that to follow in this grand point of Predestination some of the primitive Fathers and Schoolmen, is rather to lose, than to find the truth in the greater crowd and throng of their disputes, and polemical Discourses concerning it; and it would be a task altogether endless, and a Province too large to transcribe all the Ancient Fathers, and divers other learned mens determinations of this so much controverted Point. Besides, 'tis a very preposterous way, and an irrational method to pretend to the clearing of a doubt, or solving of a difficulty out of some Orthodox Fathers, and good Authentick Authors, whose Argumentations may possibly be far more ambiguous, intricate, and perplexing, than the doubt it self, and so may become matter of a farther inquiry, and which probably may suggest fresh and new Arguments, and numerous Con-  
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troverfies ; and fo they may propofe an unhappy profpect of a larger field of debate. Yet here this Doctrine of conditional Decrees may be followed, and I can eafily discover it to run in the grand channel of feveral Councils : but our violent Predeltinarian propugners are fo wedded to the fondnefs of their own conceptions, and to their fixt and unalterable opinions ( as the Decrees themfelves are ) that their invincible prejudices like Mifts and Foggs, are moft apt to intercept the cleareft light, and faireft view of truth. And thus thefe men impreguably fortifie themfelves againft all imaginable convictions: So that the many things and Doctrines which are affirmed in the Scripture, to be *δυσνόητά πνα*, hard to be apprehended, and fully to be underftood, not only the ignorant and weak, but the learned and unftable do wrefl fuch Doctrines to their own deftruction ; fo that here the Minifters of the Gospel fhould ufe the moft earneft and paffionate diffuafives to their Auditors, not to engage themfelves, and imploy their time, and talent in their contemplation of fublime niceties, and in fuch difficulties as commonly produce



think to overpower us with a numerous multitude of quotations from the holy Fathers, and especially from what *S. Austin* declares, who indeed does only direct his arrows and Arguments against *Pelagius* his growing Heresie; but however I could make it evident, that to follow in this grand point of Predestination some of the primitive Fathers and Schoolmen, is rather to lose, than to find the truth in the greater crowd and throng of their disputes, and polemical Discourses concerning it; and it would be a task altogether endless, and a Province too large to transcribe all the Ancient Fathers, and divers other learned mens determinations of this so much controverted Point. Besides, 'tis a very preposterous way, and an irrational method to pretend to the clearing of a doubt, or solving of a difficulty out of some Orthodox Fathers, and good Authentick Authors, whose Argumentations may possibly be far more ambiguous, intricate, and perplexing, than the doubt it self, and so may become matter of a farther inquiry, and which probably may suggest fresh and new Arguments, and numerous Con-  
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troverfies ; and fo they may propofe an unhappy profpect of a larger field of debate. Yet here this Doctrine of conditional Decrees may be followed, and I can eafily discover it to run in the grand channel of feveral Councils : but our violent Predeltinarian propugners are fo wedded to the fondnefs of their own conceptions, and to their fixt and unalterable opinions ( as the Decrees themfelves are ) that their invincible prejudices like Mifts and Foggs, are moft apt to intercept the cleareft light, and faireft view of truth. And thus thefe men impreguably fortifie themfelves againft all imaginable convictions: So that the many things and Doctrines which are affirmed in the Scripture, to be *δυσνόητά πᾶσι*, hard to be apprehended, and fully to be underftood, not only the ignorant and weak, but the learned and unftable do wrefl fuch Doctrines to their own deftruction ; fo that here the Minifters of the Gofpel fhould ufe the moft earneft and paffionate diffuafives to their Auditors, not to engage themfelves, and imploy their time, and talent in their contemplation of fublime niceties, and in fuch difficulties as commonly produce



duce greater heats and animosities, than plenary information, and satisfactory knowledge. Yet some sacred Doctrines of the Gospel, must not be affirm'd to be altogether unintelligible, because dull flegmatick and grosser capacities cannot perfectly apprehend them all : so that here it must be confest, that some divine truths do wear a disguise, and so they pass *incognito*. For the greatest Mysteries in Religion do not appear bare fac'd to the world, that every vulgar eye can know and discover them ; the more abstruse and deep points of Divinity, cannot be fathom'd by the contracted and short line of our reason. Now if secrets in nature are closely lockt up, much more divine ones ; and if we cannot safely arrive to a full comprehension, and perfect knowledge of what are natural ones, much less of several Myste-  
rious spiritual truths and notions. Who can untie those two perplexing knots ? and expound those two great riddles in natural Philosophy, of Motion and Time ? insomuch that *Zeno* might be well moved not to exercise only his Body, but rather a sudden passion, when he could not give a full and  
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rational account of the nature of motion. And lastly, *S. Austin* himself complains, That after he had made a long and studious disquisition of the nature of time ; yet he seem'd in his curious inquisitiveness to have lost his own, when he could only form some fleeting and imperfect notions concerning it, which though seemingly satisfactory to himself, yet he could not impart full satisfaction to another. Yet a busie curiosity will still attempt to make farther discoveries, though some divine and supernatural truths are altogether inexplicable ; and therefore they are the more apt to amaze and stagger a natural understanding, rather than sufficiently inform it ; Yet where our reason is *non plust*, we should be hush'd into a contented admiration and submissive silence ; and when our rational faculty is so defective, and is unable to limn things to an exact proportion, we must then shadow and cover them with a vail : for we must not think that we can draw the curtain, and so look into the wonderful and astonishing Mystery either of the sacred Trinity, or of the Incarnation of our blessed Saviour, and of divers other

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weighty points, which are wrapt up in perfect cloud and concealment. For when all the strongest and most active faculties of our souls have flutter'd so high, as the wings of infirm nature can elevate and mount them to; yet we shall but make up the story of *Icarus*, and realize the Fable, and so plainly experience, that our highest abilities are but as waxen plumes, and so melt and display their impotency at the presence of the more intense and scorching beams of sacred truths, and sublime notions. So that the curiously searching persons Fall will be as truly dishonourable and inglorious, as his undertaking at first was too peremptory and dangerous, and which will easily discover it self in the tragicalness of the event, as well as in the daring insolence of the attempt, and that by such mens suffering a worser fate than *Icarus* did, by falling into a more destructive and dangerous Sea, into a *mare mortuum* of ruinous Errors. We should not then too violently and fiercely pursue and follow the track of our modern disputes, lest at last we argue our selves and others out of the true way of Gospel-duty, which is to be followed

lowed in our Christian practice,  
which is the most irrefragable argu-  
ment as fully to prove, as to make  
our Calling and our Election firm and  
sure.

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CHAP.

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## C H A P. XXIX.

29. **A**N D now that my Discourse may not run in the ordinary channel with other Mens on this Subject, I shall clearly discover to you, that this pestilential Doctrine of absolute Decrees, does utterly extinguish the vital spirit, and sound efficacy of Christianity, it clips the wings of all our Christian endeavours, and so clogs the soul with weight and trouble, that it cannot take its desir'd flight towards Heaven and everlasting felicities: For when mens eternal condition shall be represented to them in the most affrighting form, and so drawn out in the black line, and dismal character of absolute Reprobation; this is but a cold inducement to follow after sincere and uniform holiness of life. This so desperate an opinion, does too easily break those cords and sacred bands that should tie, and firmly oblige all men to true Evangelical obedience in their un-  
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interrupted course and walk in the World : For upon what account should men attempt invincible impossibilities, and thus cause the greatest disquiets to their souls, and which affords new accessions of intolerably pungent grief and sorrow, when they shall seriously reflect upon all they have done, That it shall be purely in vain. ἐν τούτοις δάκρυα, Hence a flood of tears and sorrow does arise, which our eyes may run down withal, and for which our eye-lids should gush out with waters ; then we may sit down by the rivers of *Babylon*, or *Babel* in horrible amazement and confusion, where with the *Jews*, we may hang up our Harps, and Hopes together ; then Christians will become the only mourners in *Zion*, for a worser fate will then befall them, than did the poor *Jews*, which is to be eternally captive to punishment and misery. For if this position of irrelative Election shall be admitted, how can truly zealous Christians entertain their hearts or their ears with any melody. Their souls will be altogether out of tune, there will be no Musick in their Quire, their joy, and harmony will be distur-



bed by such a horrible Doctrine. And then the very Body will fall into a Trance, and become perfect Lethargy; and it will as soon partake of the souls sudden stupor and amazement: When it shall be affirm'd, that Heaven Gates shall be bolted against some persons, by an immutable and irreversibile unconditional Decree of the Almightyes; certainly then none but such persons who are not masters of their reason, or which rather discover they have none at all, will trouble themselves, or spend their labour about perfect impossibilities; and then the soul may break forth into that most dolorous and afflicting complaint of holy *David*, as in *Psal. 73. 13.* Then have I cleansed and wash'd my hands, and that from my viler impurities in vain; and to no purpose I have wash'd my self in innocency. So that it is the greatest Masterpiece of the Devils subtilty and delusion, to infuse into mens minds a convictive perswasion, that it is altogether needless to go on and persist in the hard and rugged way of piety. It is Satan's Serpentine craft, first to hood-wink the soul, and then to put on a vizard, or else to paint the face of true

true Religion very austere, so extremely deform'd, that it may terrifie poor souls, and make them start at the appearance of it. Or the Devil like a cunning Jugler will cast such artificial and strange colours before mens eyes, that they shall be unable to discern true Religious native splendor, and shining excellency. For this cruel impostor does use the Christian Religion, as the barbarous Pagans of old did the professors of it, who did thrust the Primitive Christians into the skins of the most cruel and savage Beasts, presenting them to the people in the most horrible shape of Monsters, that so when they did appear in the similitude of these kind of creatures (to whom most men have the greatest antipathy, and the most perfect abhorrence) they may be quickly excited and quickened to destroy them, and thus to worry the poor Christians to death; for 'tis very natural for men to run with the greatest violence of enraged fury, on what they perfectly loath. And if they had no passions before, this were enough to produce new ones; or if any did seem to lie hid and dormant, the proposal of such



horrid spectacles would rouse and awaken the formers rage. Now this is the very same method, and the readiest artifice the great enemy of our souls does make use of; which is to represent Christianity in the most ugly shape, with a face of affrighting severity, in the sad disguise of dreadful horror, when all this while there is a real beauty in Holiness, it hath the most amiable appearance, and it does carry the most infinitely charming and inviting countenance: all her parts and paths are pleasantness, and all her wayes are harmony and peace; and they do thereby become exceeding delightful: So that pleasantness mixt with seriousness, is very visible in the complexion and feature of true Religion and Piety. But now if this abusive proposal neither of the Doctrine of Christianity, nor of the Professors of it (the Devil raising these clouds to obscure the glory of it) will not be prevailing enough to terrifie, and so avert men from the ready embracing of true Religion, and from going on in the ways of sincere holiness; then Satan does experiment a new and fresh wile, and stratagem, and all to amuse  
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us with the various opinions of Sectaries in their new started up Controversies concerning the way and method of obtaining everlasting salvation; so that if he can but once treacherously delude men to come into that charming (though fatal circle of irrelative Predestination) they will scarce step out of it again; and hence some persons will deduce this groundless and unwarrantable inference, That if they are absolutely decreed to eternal life, then they are surely advanc'd beyond all possibility of danger, and final miscarriage; and thus they go roundly on, hence as vainly building the infallible certainty of their salvation, because they are inevitably consign'd, and Predestinated thereunto. Then on the other hand, these unhappy persons return into the very same point of the figure again, so that they still move in a sphere of wretched deceit, and so consequently of endless misery: But the great Assertors of this so pernicious a Thesis of absolute Decrees, will not hearken to, nor allow of a middle way between these two unhappy extremes, which is to walk in the path of a holy and strict con-



conversation, and a more severe Religion. Now irrespective Election cuts the very sinews of all our Christian hopes, and expectations, and so lays them a bleeding, by reason of the vain and fruitless undertaking of a true Saint, and that in order to his attainment of Heaven, and the eternal felicities thereof: for all this fully appears, and is done in the ineffective attempt of entering into Glory, if we are hinder'd and lockt out by any absolute and inevitable Decree of the Almighty; indeed, this is a Doctrine highly gratifying, and very subservient to the Devils grand interest, who by this fallacious artifice, does more easily decoy an infinite number of souls into everlasting misery and ruine, than God can win into a state of eternal blessedness. So cunning a Sophister is this old Serpent, that he can insinuate more by his flattery, nay, impose more on silly men by this so plausible a Position, than the Lord can work on them by the reality of his love in his gracious Promises, of a reward entail'd on Christian obedience. This is a piece of horrid infatuation; that men should delight more in the iron chains of  
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of the one, than in the easie freedom of the other ; That men should obey the rigorous commands of such a Master , that will certainly pay them torment for work, an assured punishment for their labour and servitude. And lastly, he will confer eternal horror for their service of him. Here the Devil seems to imitate, nay, exercise the power of the Great *Cham* of *Tartary* ; who as the one does command, so the other can persuade whole Troops of Men to ride and run down headlong into the greatest Precipices of danger, and inevitable ruine ; and yet the eternal God, the great King of the whole Earth, cannot prevail with men but to go and walk in these blest and secure paths of righteousness, that lead to everlasting safety and bliss. So that now we may really affirm, and as safely conclude, that the present Thesis of absolute Predestination, does utterly undermine all true Piety, and its practice ; it really evacuates the great and main design of the Gospel : for if men are tied, and so bound up by the fatality of the Decrees of God ; this gives the soul the greatest discouragement in duty, this consideration  
does



does freeze the blood in the poor Christians veins, and makes him of a most vigorous undertaker, to stand stock still in a cold and stupefying amazement, it cramps the most active spirits, strangely benums the heart, and makes it languish in perpetual contemplations and thoughts of future misery. Thus you clearly see that the crying up of unconditional Election, dulls the most industrious Christians soul, and altogether dispirits it in any Religious exercise. For that Christian must be truly said to be dead with sorrow and grief, whom the warmer hope of a better life does not continually revive and comfort. Now the infallible assurance of receiving the promised rewards of Grace and Obedience; this works the most considerable and signal Miracles, it plentifully administers and does give the sincere Christian a new life, it raises the truly pious mans hopes, as from the grave of deep anxiety and care, and so consequently, animates all true Believers in the wayes of righteousness and holiness, and in their daily journey, and weary stages of duty towards Heaven and Glory. Now the contrary persuasion

swasion of absolute Predestination , gives men the greatest encouragement to decline the wayes of Evangelical obedience , quenches the divine ardors of the new Convert ; and certainly all men should here rather foment and encrease the small spark of desire after future happiness glowing in all peoples breasts, (which blessed state, nature it self does incessantly gasp and breath after ). Now to raise our expectations of happiness high, and then to have them fall flat and low, this will immerse the soul in the deepest gulph of despair imaginable ; thus 'tis evident, that the Doctrine of absolute Decrees, shipwracks mens hopes of obtaining eternal felicities ; for a poor soul cannot fix it self, or cast anchor upon any such deluding offers and invitations. For, shall the Combatants in our Saviours Camp, be rewarded with nothing for all their hard service, but with the wages of death ? Then afflicted Christians may cry out, as one of *Julius Caesar's* Souldiers did, Must I reap no other harvest for all my blood sown in the field of Action, than a dishonourable Death ? and must I instead of expecting a triumph with Life, find only



only a miserable defeat, attended with death and ruine? and instead of being Crown'd, must I fall a Sacrifice? must I meet and engage with greater hazards at last, than all the Armies of difficulties I encountered and conquered before could present me with? I had far better have suffered the misery of twenty deaths, may a devout Christian say, here in this World, than to meet with an inglorious one at last? and must I see my condition only legible in that sad and fatal Book of sufferings? must all my acquests be nothing but punishment, branded with eternal shame for all that I have undergone and attempted in my Christian progress; and for so many remarkable dangers and temptations to sin, I have so diligently escaped? Now such as these may and will be the sad and grievous expostulations of many true professors of the Gospel, ecchoed forth, and accented with the most passionate strains of grief and groans, since they have so earnestly endeavoured in their Christian march, to obtain an entrance into Heaven and eternal happiness, if such shall find and perceive themselves absolutely excluded

ded by an immutable Decree of the Almighty, and so be repulst, and denied admission into Glory at last: the due consideration thereof, and the infinitely sad reflection on this dismal state of misery should sure be enough to move the great and the most compassionate God and Father, the great lover of souls, to rescind (if there were any but hypothetical Decrees, I say) any fixed constitutions of another kind, and for the righteous Judge of all the World to reverse even the very sentence of Death. For I beseech you, what signifies the most inviting and alluring prize and Crown of Glory, and the most affrighting and formidable danger? if we have not a power to obtain the one, or have not power and ability to turn from the other? Thus when we consider what fatal incapacities and invincible difficulties in this manner we lie under, then the position of irrelative Election, must needs impede, and totally obstruct us in our Christian course and race.



## C H A P. XXX.

30. **L**ET us not then too closely adhere to these dangerous and destructive Principles of the *Anti-Remonstrants*; for the sum of this present modern Controversie, and the whole of the dispute about it, must be plainly resolv'd into this, whether the infinite power of God, and his absolute sovereignty and dominion over his Creatures, shall be more advanc'd, than the glorious property of the Divine Mercy, and ineffable Goodness? Now the great Patrons of absolute Election, do place the great Attribute of the Almighty's Power, in the highest Sphere of Motion: the more sober Asserters of Conditional Election and Reprobation, do derive the spring and origine of them from more different Causes than the former do. For these as they assign the Decrees of Election from the Almighty's intuition of Mans righteousness and holiness, so they

they do the other of Reprobation, from the consideration of sin and impiety. Now upon these two Poles, the two distant states of mans salvation, or damnation do immediately depend and move. So that the first Opinionist does frame to himself a different scheme of Gods power from the other. The latter, the *Remonstrant*, entertains a proper Idea and representation not only of Gods infinite Mercy and Compassion, but of his essential justice. And here I shall fully declare to you the truth of all; Now it must be granted on all sides, that in respect of Gods Nature and infinite Perfection, he does by one most pure and simple act, decree all things to be effected; but if respect be had to the things so decreed, some Priority and Posteriority may justly take place. Therefore most Authours treating on this subject, have entertained different notions of the divine decrees in respect of the order of them. This then being acknowledg'd to be a great and an undoubted truth, that the Election of the Almighty cannot be of all men; for a general Election is truly repugnant to the Principles of right Reason (it being an act of the receiving of  
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one, and rejecting of another ) therefore four sorts of Decrees may be justly assign'd and allow'd of ; as so many branches springing from one great root. And now to imprint in us a due apprehension of them ; the first is founded in Gods Mission of his only begotten Son into the World to redeem Mankind ; so that what was promised in the Old Testament, is confirmed and ratified in the New ; in the fulness of time the Almighty sending his Son : But now whether the consideration of a Mediatour between God and Man, did in the divine Decree precede the consideration of eternal Salvation to be obtained by him, or the Salvation appointed to Believers, does precede the consideration of a Mediator, is a Question which the *Calvinists* themselves did disagree about, and so they left it under doubt and dispute. But methinks, this does not carry so great difficulty along with it ( as some fondly imagine ) for since our blessed Saviour is acknowledg'd the meritorious Cause of Mans Salvation, then the knot is easily untied, since the cause in order of Nature must, and still does precede the effect, ( the former being

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alwayes antecedent to the other ) and certainly then the consideration of a Mediatour must præ-exist in the divine Idea ; in order to the negotiating the great business of Mans salvation by him. Now the second Decree of God is to give eternal life to all Believers ; this you know is the great condition of Gods Covenant of Grace and Mercy made with Mankind. And this truth runs in expresse terms in the sacred Scripture, as in *S. John 3. 16.* *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.* The third Decree is to give and administer sufficient Grace and strength to believe, otherwayes all our Christian endeavours (as you have heard at large) are vain and fruitless ; for by nature we are so weak and infirm, that we need still the helps and Auxiliaries of divine Grace, to enable us to perform a supernatural duty (which is truly to believe in God) and all in order to a blessed end, our eternal salvation. The fourth and last Decree is, to make such men partakers of salvation, whom God in his divine Prescience did foresee would



believe in his Son ; and by his assisting Grace persevere in the same. Now the most rigid Predestinarians do give their ready assent to the three first kinds of Decrees. And that they highly concern all that are within the pale of Christianity, that are within the sound of the Gospel, and so have heard of Christ. But some out of meer peevishness will not admit of this last, as not deserving the very name of a Decree, affirming that it is altogether unbecoming the Majesty of Heaven, the divine Wisdom. For if a gracious King foreknowing who would come in, and so acknowledge their rebellion by their submission, should decree that all comers in should be pardoned ; then it is urged by some opposers of this truth, that it is no way suitable or agreeable to royal wisdom to make another Decree, to pardon those whom he foresaw would come in. I answer, That the latter being but the exemplification of the former, it need not be the subject of so great and fierce contention among Christians professing the same Faith. And besides, these Decrees as to the order thereof, are so modell'd *quoad ad nos*,  
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as to us, to make them lie level as to some measure of the knowledge of them with the lowest and meanest capacities, and thereby fully to demonstrate what God requires of us. And then in the last place for some to object that Gods conditional Decrees, as to the last sort can be of no use or efficacy to any man in this life; that must be exploded as a most gross and palpable error: for such constitutions of the Almighty must be acknowledged to be the greatest incentive to all to repent and believe, in order to fit them for the promised blessings of the Gospel. And as to what is farther argued, I answer, That Gods irrelative Decrees do not confer more benefit to *David*, than to *Saul*, as men; neither more to *Abel*, than to *Cain*, as Brothers; neither to *Peter*, than to *Judas*, as they were both Disciples. Now as the bare name of the one does not secure him Heaven, so neither that of the other exclude him from it; but as the first was a *Man after Gods own heart*, the other had a Spirit of falsehood; the one did worship the true God, the other did run to false ones, to Sorcerers and to Witches. As to



the other instance, *Abel* did offer up an acceptable Sacrifice, the other did what was sinful, as not proceeding from the same upright heart, and to the same holy and divine ends. And then lastly, that *Judas* would have received the same blessing, as *Peter* did, if he had not so unworthily betray'd his Master ; now this great truth is confirm'd and more personally applied in answer to *S. Peters* question in the 19. of *S. Matth. 27.* Vers. where he saith, *Master, we have forsaken all, and followed thee, what shall we have therefore ?* Our blessed Saviour replies in these words in the following Verse 28. *That they that have followed me in the regeneration, in the new birth, discovering the same in true penitential tears as Peter did ; when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve Tribes of Israel.* Now among these very persons, to whom our Saviour addresses his discourse, *Judas* was, he was one of the twelve, and he had a Throne appointed for him ; and a Scepter, and a Crown was intended ; there is no mention of the least exception of him, for the number  
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of Thrones and Cœlestial Dignities, was proportion'd to the number of their persons. So that it must be truly concluded, that Judas did make the exception himself, by betraying his Lord and Master; and so he must needs fail of the promised Mercy, the obtaining his enthroning in Heaven: since the divine Election is still a condition annext, and linkt to duty and obedience. And so I shall now proceed fully to demonstrate to you, that, that is a false notion of Gods power that interferes with, or any way opposeth his Goodness and Mercy. 'Tis an undeniable Maxim, and known rule in the Schools, That *quicquid dicitur de Deo, est ipse Deus*, (that is) that whatsoever is attributed to God, is God himself: so that we must not allow of any unequal apprehension either of the divine power, justice, or mercy; for these glorious Attributes do shine with equal rayes, with the same intense and Meridian splendour, so that the radiant light of the one, does not eclipse or obscure the other, for we must by no means advance the one to the lessening or diminution of the other. For every one of Gods essential



properties have their distinct province, that they need not invade and intrench upon one anothers peculiar. Now as you have partly heard before, that the Predestination of men is one simple and immanent act in God; yet in condescension to our humane and infirm capacities, we may be justly licent to apprehend several parts in the divine Decree, the one concerning the eternal Election of men, the other respective or consequent of the former, which consists in the execution of the Decree in reference to Men. Now the ultimate end of all is, the Almightyes Glory, which is manifested in the advancing not of one single, but of all his divine Attributes not only of his power, but of his justice sweetned with Mercy. So that all Gods Properties do appear, and shine forth illustriously in the great work of his Election of men to eternal life. For the Lord did not intend the bare declaration of his infinite power, but much more that of his ineffable Mercy in that act of divine Goodness exercis'd towards Man in his lowest state of misery. So that as God is a Sovereign Lord, he is as well a compassionate Father,

ther, and a righteous Judge, and so the divine Decrees are as just, as they are mighty, and as merciful as either, and his justice in the same, is as essential to him, as his Omnipotence, and his compassion equal, nay it does outweigh : as the *Psalmist* tells us, his mercy is supereminent, and *above all his works*, and so in the seventh Chapter of *Micah*, and the 18. Verse, we read there that *God delighteth in mercy*; but we never read that he rejoyceth in Judgment, but rather in mercy against it. So that the divine Goodness, like a tender Mother, does hang and hover, and melt in tears over a weak and fallen Child, whom justice does so severely threaten for his lapse by disobedience. Thus the divine Mercy does highly display it self in a perfect commiseration of Mankind. *Seneca* tells us in his Epistles, That *primus deorum cultus est Deos credere, deinde reddere maiestatem, simul & bonitatem, sine qua nulla est maiestas*, ( that is ) That the foundation of the worship of God is laid in the belief of a God, according to that Text in *Heb. 11.6*. That he that comes unto God (that is) by way of duty and service of him, must believe that he is :  
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And then the next step towards it is, to acknowledge Gods Majesty, and as well his Goodness, without which there cannot possibly be any greatness; in which words, the natural Philosopher affirms, that Gods infinite Goodness seems to comprehend, and include all the rest of the Lords glorious Attributes; nay, to be the highest perfection of the divine Essence.

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**C H A P.**

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CHAP. XXXI.

31. **N**OW from these plain and evident premisses, the consequence of the discourse, must needs at least be this. I say, we may very safely conclude from it, That the Doctrine of absolute Predestination cannot be founded on the great and Sovereign Attribute of the Almighty's Power and Dominion over his Creatures. For if it was design'd to advance his infinite Power and Greatness; why should then the Apostate Devils in their war, which they have alwayes maintained against the Omnipotent God and his Church; why should they be so strongly prevailing? as that the Almighty should not gain and bring more by his power to eternal salvation, than the fallen Angels do men to everlasting destruction? shall a rebel Creature, and that of an inferiour order, conquer more than the Lord of Hosts? than the mighty Arm of Omnipotent



nipotence it self? Now the whole World is but a larger Common, and so must admit of a greater and a farther extent, than the true Christian Churches enclosure. For the number of true Believers is but small (like the lesser tythe to the numerous Harvest of Mankind) therefore our blessed Saviour does preach the truth of this fundamental Doctrine to us, upon this very account, that men should earnestly contend *and strive to enter in at the strait gate*, as in S. Matth. 7. 13. *because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.* Now the Devil like the great *Goliath*, seems not only to defie, but (if it were possible) to defeat not only the mighty power, but the blessed design of the mercy of the living God to all miserable sinners: But 'tis strange that Satan can reduce a greater multitude to his Empire, than the Lord can bring into his everlasting Kingdom, and perfect state of blessedness; and that the great hater of souls should work more over to rebellion, than he that is a true lover of them can to their due obediences. Certainly God did never decree such advantage to his,  
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and our grand enemy the Devil. For where then were the mighty effects of his power? so then we cannot with any probability assign the cause of any absolute Predestination of men to eternal life or death, to the bare and naked exaltation of Gods Power and Greatness. But this act of the divine Will in the Predestination of Men, does best consist with the reputation of his Justice, his Mercy and Wisdom, and ineffable Goodness. Yet some in the World, have violently attempted to conquer men into a full belief of this their avowed assertion, and that by the pretended variety of Arguments, and numerous weapons drawn out of the Ninth Chapter to the *Romans*; this being the great Magazin of all their imaginary strength, and the only fortress, their cried up strongest defence. But now he that shall diligently examine the whole purport of that Chapter, (as it is excellently well done by several persons, as *Episcopus*, and others of great and eminent abilities) he will quickly fetch Arguments and Arrows enough out of their own Quiver to wound them into a confession of the contrary opinion; for the great design  
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of the whole Chapter hath a direct and an immediate aspect on the different estate and various condition of the *Jews* and *Gentiles*; so that the Divine act of Reprobation, cuts off the *Jews* from the promised Blessings no longer than they continue in unbelief, as does most clearly appear from *Rom. 11. 23.* *And they also, that is, the people of the Jews, if they bide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.* And Gods Election comprehends the *Gentiles* no longer, than they persevere in the Faith and belief of Christ, as is evident from the 22. Verse of that Chapter, where Saint *Paul* begins with an *ecce*, behold! which does still usher in something that is very remarkable; where the Apostle does give us a prospect of the goodness and severity of God on them that fell, severity, in the abscission of the *Jews*; but towards thee, goodness, *if thou continue in his goodness, otherways thou also shalt be cut off*; herein directing himself to the *Gentiles*. And S. Peter becomes the preacher of this so great a truth that I do assert, as in *Acts 10. 34.* *Then Peter opened his mouth, as speaking some great thing of mighty weight*  
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and importance ; of which he gives us an infallible assurance, and therefore he prefixes a kind of Oath to this his so solemn an asseveration : *of a truth I perceive* (saith he) *ἐν ἀληθείᾳ*, I am infinitely taken with the love of this so admirable a truth, I am perfectly wraps up in the contemplation of this so Heavenly a Doctrine, *that God is no respecter of persons* ; (that is) that he hath no regard, neither does he cast the least eye of favour in his acceptance to the external condition of the person, let him be of what Nation, or Family, Name, or Quality soever ; where S. Peter in his Sermon does clip the wings of the Jews confidence ; for they were of so narrow a Breast and Soul, as they would confine the divine Goodness within their own limits, from the viler effects of envy to the good of others, they would wholly engross all the Bounty and Boons of Heaven to themselves ; when S. Peter here does expressly declare, That God does not respect mens persons but their piety, and you have a clear instance of this in the second Verse of the 10 to the Acts of the Apostles, of one Cornelius a Centurion, the Romans did collect  
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and chuse their Souldiers out of several Provinces, but the strength and flower of their Army did come and spring out of *Italy*. Now this *Cornelius* was by Birth an *Italian*, where the whole Nation was plung'd in horrible Idolatry, and this Centurion was in the Camp, where sin and vice did march uncontroul'd; yet when *Cornelius* did become a true Worshipper of God, a true Convert, a Profelyte in heart, though not of the Circumcision, and of the same open profession with the *Jews*; yet he fearing God, being truly Religious towards the Lord, and righteous towards men, is readily accepted of God, and as soon admitted into his favour: thus you may easily perceive, that in any Nation, ἐν τῇ πεποιδί, if it be in *Persia*, as *S. Chrysostome* observes, in the remotest parts of the habitable World, yet he that feareth God (where, by the fear of God, his whole Worship is clearly understood) and continuing in the same, and so working righteousness, (that is) when the seeds of Gods Grace and Goodness are sown in mens hearts, and grow up in the practice of their lives, such a person is accepted, or becomes truly acceptable unto

unto God. So that it is not by reason of any absolute divine Decree ; but the essential ground of all Gods respect to Mankind, is derived from their piety, and uprightness of heart and life. Now the violent defenders of unconditional Decrees, their Principles are so weak and infirm, that they must of necessity call in the Auxiliaries, and joint aids of the most cunning contrivances and intrigues of men ; but every good Christian should be ready arm'd, and fortified against all their most treacherous invasions and delusions in this so important a concern : and here give me leave to re-assume that great Apostolical caution in *Ephes. 4. 14.* *That you be not carried about with every wind of Doctrine, and that by the sleight of men,* ἐν τῇ κωβείᾳ τῆς ἀνθρώπων : the word is a Metaphor taken from the cunning tricks in Gaming (there being as great Counterfeits in Religion, as there be cheats in the other). Now the subtle Gamester by the palming of a *Die*, by his ready art of deceit, can throw what Cast he hath a mind to ; and the close Heretick does as soon delude us, with what seemingly plausible Doctrine he pleaseth. So that this so great



a Jugler in Divinity, can as easily win a real belief of whatsoever specious and gilded Opinion he does present Men withal, *διὰ τῆς μεθοδεύειας τῆς πλάνης* by these fallacious methods and artifices the Devil gets the greatest number, and the most considerable prizes on the stage of the World. But shall the grand enemy of mankind bring a greater multitude to his party, and hook and catch more by his specious baits of pleasure, than God can invite by offering men the most ravishing and really transcendent joyes? That the one should prevail and take more with his momentary delights, and minute drops, than God can by his overflowing springs and rivers of comfort that run at his right hand for evermore. And lastly, 'tis strange that Satan can allure a greater number with the small petite perishing commodities of this World? than the Lord can by the lasting and most durable treasures in Heaven? And shall rational men now a-days own, and as vainly affect the simplicity of the weak *Indians*? to be far more delighted with the meer gaudy superficies of Worldly things, with painted Glasse? than with rich Jewels,

Jewels, and Diadems of Glory? and that men should be more transported with the love of poor empty enjoyments, than with the offerture of an eternal possession? of a never ceasing Kingdom in Glory? 'tis an undeniable argument of horrible perverseness, that men should become such cruel enemies to themselves, as *not to suffer Christ to rule over them.* And yet to permit the Devil to insult and triumph; and thus shall men be more diligent and industrious for ruine, than appear concerned for eternal felicity. So that now it is high time that every sober Christian should reject and explode this so vain and desperate a Doctrine of peremptory and absolute decretory Sentences of the Almighty. For that Satan this Prince of darkness, should draw such shoals of followers after him, is not by vertue of any peremptory and absolute divine Decree. So that the original of all must of necessity be derived from the intrinsic nature of Man; and therefore God does all along in the Scripture complain of the most disingenious tempers of men, with the most accusing reflections upon their horrible incorrigibleness,



which is joyn'd and accompanied with the most pathetical reproof of mens obstinacy. That neither his great Mercy, nor his divine Judgments, can be of that prevalency as to make men return from the error of their wayes. And shall we not sooner hearken to the still & calm voice of God in mercy, than to that more audible one in Judgment, and lowder Thunder ? and shall not mens hearts be more oblig'd by the milder arguments of Gods love and endearments, than by the sharper ones of his terrors and threatnings ? Nay, that men should arrive to so great a height of desperate impiety, as to despise and make a mock of Gods various medicinal dispensations towards them. 'Tis a very fatal Prognostick, and as certain an indication, That the Patient is past all possible recovery, when he falls into strange and ridiculous Fits of laughter ; then indeed death derides the Physician, and as readily mocks all the attempts of a cure ; but it is a far more dangerous symptom of the desperate condition of such men, when they as scornfully contemn and scoff at Gods gracious dealings with them : when Men shall decry the wayes of  
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godliness and piety. To laugh it ( if possible ) into reproach and contempt when such shall appropriate to themselves the epithete of being fools, and that *by making a meer mock of sin*, and the judgments of it. Then indeed men have arriv'd to such a remediless estate, that having thus fill'd up the measure of their iniquities, as a full grown Imposthume becomes quite ripe for excision, so the other to be cut off by the hand of Divine vengeance. And thus the Almighty does by the power of his justice assuredly punish such, whom he cannot gain and invite by his divine Clemency and Mercy. For the just Anger of God begins where his infinite Goodness terminates and ends. His punitive justice does not arise, till the great Luminary of his Mercy is set and disappears: and yet the impartial justice of the great Judge of Heaven and Earth, does not make any the least encroachment on his Mercy and Goodness to his Creatures. Since it hath a very large and ample extent of its own, comprehending a great number of rebellious and obdurate sinners within its verge and power. Now on the other hand, we should not subtract so



much from the great Attribute of divine Goodness and Mercy, as to make and bring a greater accession to his Sovereignty and Power. For to do this, would be almost to leave him that is the most merciful God, a bare and empty name and title, and that only to make up the grandeur of the stile of the Great and Glorious, and dreadful Majesty of Heaven and Earth. Let us then wholly renounce this unreasonable and absurd position of any absolute Decree: Let us never acknowledge this, which is only the approved Article of the *Geneva* Belief. For why should every man be excited, and quickened all along in the holy Scriptures constantly to struggle, and to strive, as in *Luke 13.24. ἀγωνίζεσθε εἰσέλθειν*, (that is) to contend with the greatest vigour, and violence, as in wrestling. For in that laborious exercise, a continued earnestness hath a mighty influence on mens bodies; Christian diligence should be much more on mens souls, and be strongly exerted in their lives: the former is concentered in every Wrestlers sinews and joints; so that the parts of the Body thus exercised, should instruct the soul in its encounters,

ters, and so to go on in the way of obedience, and all to fit, and readily dispose us to strive *to enter in at the strait gate*: yet pray what signifie such ingeminated and passionate exhortations in the Gospel *to enter*? if it is only open to a certain priviledged number of some few Travellers to the New *Jerusalem* (that Heavenly Countrey). Yet here some bold Fiduciaries, who do confidently pretend that their names are certainly written in the Book of Life, have strived, nay violently contended for the enlargement of this *σενῆς πόλης*, of this exceeding narrow door, or way, to make it a greater passage and road for the rebellious, the opposers of Lawful Government, these overgrown sinners, to go in at, to give the easiest admission to themselves and so great a bulk of sin, for both at once to enter in. For they that so highly boast, that they are truly Gods Elected ones, are adjudged and as soon declared in the Court of their own erecting, to be no Criminals, no though they perpetrate the greatest and most horrible Villanies. So that any that are of the



absolute Predestinarian party, shall with a *non obstante*, notwithstanding the clamour of their desperate impieties and lowdest guilts, be pronounced truly godly persons. Now then upon this account, the most profligate and habituated sinner need not suffer his soul to sink with faintings, and despair of finding Mercy at last. And the only infallible means, and the best expedient to be found out for this, would be to enter their names (if they are not registred already) into the List of the Predestinarian defenders, and so to be sure to throng to that side, when men are become beyond expression vicious, and so bad, as they will not continue in obedience to the Divine and strict Laws of true Piety, and Evangelical Holiness. And this makes men flie so hastily from Christ's Colours, to the Enemies Camp. Thus the Doctrine of absolute Decrees, is set up by some a City of Refuge for the worst kind of sinners, the most desperate ones to flie unto, hoping there to obtain safety; nay some persons snatch at this Tenet, as at a Plank to preserve them from the common Shipwrack of the sin-

sinful race of Mankind ; and many times they do lay so much stress unto it, and so heavy a weight of sin upon it, that they as soon sink both their confidence, and the Doctrine it self, and so it cannot securely land them on the Shoar and safety.

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**CHAP.**

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## CHAP. XXXII.

32. **A**ND now I could further make it evident to you, that this so destructive an opinion of irrelative Decrees, is plainly contradictory to that express Maxim, and Position in Gods sacred Word, in *Heb. 12. 14.* *That without holiness, ἀγιασμός, importing true sanctification and purity of life, without which no man shall see the Lord.* But here 'tis strange, that the Devil that great impostor, should draw a more considerable company into a joint league of friendship with himself; and that men should set themselves in open hostility against God and Piety. This certainly is a most cunning fascination of the Spirit of delusion, that he should bewitch a far greater number with the deceitfulness of sin, than God can counter-charm with the sweetness of his Mercy? And that the Devil should prevail more with his arguments of flattery, than the

the Lord can with the sacred endearments of his love and clemency? This is an egregious piece of folly, that men should suffer themselves so sheepishly to be entangled, and at last ensnared into unhappy contracts and mortgages of themselves, and at length to be forced to sell their souls outright; and that all this while poor men will not accept of an eternal Estate, and a never failing Inheritance, purchased by the Blood of Christ our Saviour, *ὁμολογούμενος*, without farther dispute, or the least Controversie; this so desperate a madness, this so deplorable an effect; this chusing ruine bare-fac'd, can never proceed from any positive necessitating Decree of the Almighty, but meerly from the horrible perverseness of Mens own Wills, that the lighter things of this World, should weigh down and turn the scale, and ballance men more, than the far more ponderous and weightier mass of eternal Glory? And shall men still continue to swallow down the gilded Pills of sin and wickedness, rather than the sovereign Cordials of Gods Grace and Mercy prescrib'd and tender'd in his holy Gospel? And lastly, What shall  
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we imagine will become of men that will be more oblig'd by transient sinful delights, and short-liv'd enjoyments in this world, than by real though distant prospects of a future state of felicity in everlasting Glory? and which is wonderfully prodigious, that men should be more affected with howling and gnashing of teeth, than with the sweetest harmony and melodies of Heaven? Certainly then, from all these Considerations, we may collect a very safe Inference, That Mans destruction and ruine is of himself; let us not therefore ever argue it, or fetch it higher from the divine Decree of absolute Reprobation; it must of necessity be superinduc'd from another different and foreign Coast. Let therefore the accursed fruits of sin and iniquity, the bitterness of its effects be own'd and acknowledg'd to derive and spring from its own native soil, the corrupt ground of our own depraved hearts: For not only the fatal growth of sin, but the sin it self does arise from the unhappy root of our own vicious natures and constitutions. 'Tis reported of the *Pelican*, that she violently tears her tender Breast with her sharper Beak,

Beak, so that at those very orifices she lets forth life; *Propriis configimur alis*: the event of Mens actions parallels the History; for a sinner is so cruel to himself, that he does inflict his own mortal wounds, and that with his own hands, whereby the soul does eternally perish; thus we become Vipers to our selves, and tear out our own bowels; our greatest enemies are inbred, those intestine and domestick ones, and all the Darts whereby we are too sadly hurt and wounded, are taken out of our own Quiver; and as the Prophet speaks, *we fall by our own iniquities*. And therefore that severe imprecation which the Prophet *Hosea* uses against *Israel*, as in *Hosea* 13. 9. may as well be applied to every rebellious sinner, *Thou hast perfectly destroyed thy self*. In which place, words seem to run themselves into sentences of grief and sorrow, for mens wonderful stubbornness and impenitence. Thus you clearly see, that we are the sole causes of our own ruine, we become principals and accessaries to our own unhappy fate. And Men do the greatest injury to themselves, when they so scornfully contemn the most effectual and so-



sovereign remedy for their sins and wounds, when men will not come unto Christ, that they might have life; and that by the right use of the means directly conducing to it. Now the Almighty does not compel any to happiness, he does not force our consent, but he endeavours to draw all men by the great attractives of his love, and benign purposes of his Goodness towards them; he forces liberty on no person, men may defie a Manumission if they please, and so submit themselves to the most ignoble vassalage of sin and Satan; they may suffer their ears to be fixt and nailed to the door post, as the servant under the old Law did, as in *Exod. 21. 5.* when he shall plainly say, *I love my Master, my Wife, and my Children, I will not go free.* Thus he and every refractory sinner, may undergo a whole age of toil and bondage, and so become the captives of sin and of the Devil, and fall in love with chains, and doat on fetters: Men, I say, may continue in this most servile and slavish state, and never accept of a blessed enfranchisement; but here 'tis sad to reflect, that this Devils pretended promises of freedom, shall have more efficacy

cacy on Mens hearts and minds, than the real Redemption of us by our blessed Saviour from the worst of slaveries, and bondage to corruption. 'Tis a horrid piece of stupidity, that men should so willingly give up their ears to be boren by so cruel a Master, that great *Abaddon*, or destroyer of Men, who though he allows men present, yet they are only imaginary pleasures, and they will be sure to be attended with bitterness, nay with future stings and stripes. Now assuredly, *If Christ make us free*, as in *S. John 8. 36.* *then shall we be free indeed*, and that by being advanc'd into the glorious liberty of the Sons of God. So that now no man can pretend to any fatal necessity of continuing in a condition of horrid servitude, and the severest thraldom; or in the least wise, to be fast tied in the cords of ruine and destruction; and shall the Devil then lead us captive at his will? and shall he present sin and iniquity in its most amiable and lovely dress? and with such an inviting aspect, that men will resolve to enjoy its treacherous embraces, tho' they really know them to be deadly and fatal ones? Shall men prefer paint and colour, before



fore the Beauty of Holiness ?' which should not only allure the eye, but ravish and charm the very heart. Now the practice of true Piety, is the universal intendment of the Gospel, and the *habendum* of Gods Mercies. The whole Tenour of his Evangelical Covenant of eternal life and blessedness, runs in a conditional form and style of real obedience, which is the most effectual means of making all Gods promised blessings in the sacred Scripture to be really ours, and so we may very safely appropriate them to ourselves. And now men should divert their useless and vain contemplations from aspiring to a too confident search into the several pretended links of absolute Predestination, they should rather tie themselves in the firmest bands of Christian diligence and care, and all to this great end, as in 2 Pet. 1. 5, 6, 7. To add to the chain of Christian Graces and Vertues, to unite to their knowledge faith, and to their faith to annex patience, and to fasten their patience in an indissoluble knot of real godliness, firmly twisted in Brotherly kindness ; and thus ending in a lasting charity towards all men.

I might now more fully demonstrate to you, that from this fallacious pretext of peremptory Decrees, the wildest and most erroneous consequences, and practices imaginable have been deduc'd, and that from this so abominable a Principle. I shall forbear to present you with a larger Catalogue of its dismal and pernicious effects; for we shall find too many pregnant proofs of its inauspicious and fatal influence, if we make no farther enquiry than our own experience prompts us to; For where this Doctrine hath been rooted, and too fastly rivetted in mens minds, it hath produc'd the most formidable and direful ills, it does highly embolden men in sin, and it does seem to consecrate the foulest and most enormous Crimes, and sets men on to a ready subversion of well ordered and governed Kingdoms; on this very notorious and false pretence, that only the Elect, the Saints must bear the greatest rule, and exercise the highest and sole dominion on Earth. And the fundamental cause of all Religious quarrels, hath been the started-up Tenet of absolute Predestination; so that



the force of this erroneous perswasion may be very easily collected from this, that it carries a secret Venome along with it, and the admission of it is as of Poyson into the Body, which as quickly runs from the heart to the hand; which does as soon lift up it self in horrible rebellion, and disobedience against what is truly the best, as regal Government is. And upon this account too too many have sacrificed their lives, and that in an unhappy justification of their Schism, and Crimes, and open Rebellion, being truly animated thereunto on this confidence, and pure impulse, that they are absolutely Predestinated, and so they are in a perfect state of Grace, and Salvation. So that some persons that take up this Doctrine, think that they may live in the perpetration of the greatest sins, without the least danger as to the final event of their souls; as though the hopes of Heaven and happiness may stand, and become truly consistent with a most profligate and vicious life. For if absolute Predestination must be freely granted, without any consideration of piety, or  
sin

sin in persons ; then to what purpose should men be still and daily prest to go on in the strictnesses of Religion, or of sanctity. For it is all one, nay the very the same, whether a man be good or bad, truly innocent, or a criminal ; if neither the being the one or the other, will no way make an alteration in the fatal conclusion, or issue of things. Indeed, this desperate opinion hath a mighty influence to the disparagement of a strict and pious life. 'Tis the unhappy fomentor of irreligion, it highly contributes to horrid impieties ; and it becomes both Parent and Nurse to the vilest actions, and the most abominable rebellions in well ordered Kingdoms. And there have not been wanting many eminent instruments thereof ; when the Ministers of the Gospel, which should be the Embassadors of peace, have turn'd Heralds to proclaim a pretended holy War, whereby they have been so successful, that they have raised greater armies of vice, than of Men ; and then it does seem an indifferent contest, whether the Usurper, or the Owner have the best and greatest right ;



multitude indeed, and strength swaying the *Mobile* either way : for the desperately flagitious rabble do run in Troops, when Rebellion does entitle God to the Cause ; so that then the worst must be immediately Christen'd the Righteous, the holy Cause. Now in the inflammation of any Member in the natural Body, there is a present *juncto*, and confluence of assisting noxious humours, which do strengthen and cause the exacerbation of the disease. 'Tis the same in the Body Politick, no sooner hath the inflammation of Pride blown up ambitious desires into a ready rebellion, but all the sins of the people muster themselves up, and flee thither for sanctuary. What Bankrupt will not then hope to pay his adverse Creditor with the Sword ? and thus cancel all his obligations by spoil and rapine ; and then every private jar offers it self to be revenged. So that when Ministers themselves ( these Pulpit-Incendaries ) have inflamed mens heads and hearts with a giddy and erroneous zeal ; they have presently made such use of their new Converts, as *Hannibal*

but did of those Oxen, when he did first fire the combustible matter, that was placed between their horns, he immediately sent them forth to kindle the greater disturbance, and to bring wild fire into the enemies Camp. In this very manner the giddy multitude running in Herds, have been excited to the greatest incursions, not only in exercising their strength and fury in pushing at, but if possible to beat down flat, and so violently to trample on a due and lawful Constitution and Government. And then when the flame of sedition does break forth, men are quickly instigated to the commission of the most daring sins, and damnable impieties, and that by the ready promises of their Religious Enchanters, who do pretend to secure men Heaven, by sending them downright to Hell; that pretend to reverse *S. Pauls* sentence, That he that resisteth the power, does really receive damnation; that on the contrary, the most rebellious shall be infallibly saved, by reason they are concluded within the limits, and safe boundaries of absolute Predestination. Thus



some zealous *Butefeau's* have started up in the Pulpit; and have seemed to engage and mortgage Heaven for the vilest Rebels security, and all to gain Auxiliaries from bold sin, and impudent vice. Thus they have highly animated their Profelytes on to the commission of the most open impieties, and that by the repeated promises of their certain and infallible salvation (as they come within the compass of unconditional Election) nay, some Predestinarian Informers of the Consistory of *Geneva*, do loudly affirm, that men by acting the highest Rebellions, perpetrating so great evils, have thereby given the clearest testification, that they are truly Predestinated; otherwayes they must come under the direful Anathema of *Curse ye Meroz*; because they would not come forth to the help of the Lords Anointed, his separated and Elect people: Thus these egregious Imposters have arrived to so great a height of wickedness, that they have pretended to have overpowered Omnipotence it self; nay to revoke and rescind the divine Decrees, who have  
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fully assured men eternal salvation, nay, even such persons who have done things worthy, and that of eternal damnation: and all this must be bottomed and built on that so weak a foundation of Gods absolute Decrees. Whereupon these Empiricks in Divinity, have proclaimed the infallible benefit of this *καθολικον*, of this Antidote, that so men may be encouraged to swallow down easily the most deadly Poysons, the most destructive errors, and the most fatal prejudices both against Church and State; and by this means the greatest Malefactors may be induc'd to flie to the Horns of this new erected Altar; and the vilest Criminals, who being almost ingulph't in a deep despair, by reason of his horribly sinful course of life, will quickly and as greedily catch at these weak Reeds (like sinking men at slender twigs) I mean these infirm Doctrines of unconditional Election and Reprobation. Truly this so confident a Generation of Men, do offer the greatest affront, and the highest contumely to an infinitely righteous God, when they shroud so



many notorious sins and pollutions under his purer Patronage: For some make this Doctrine large enough to cover the greatest heap of sins, and rebellions under the skirts of its Mantle, when men do not make it their care, nay become less industrious to conceal their iniquities within themselves in their own Breasts and Bosoms, but rather busie themselves in wrapping them up, and so hiding them under the Veil of the Sanctuary of the Lord, the thin *Vela-*  
*men* of the irrelative Decrees of God, boasting that such *Theses* are truly divine and warrantable, and all to perswade men into a plenary belief of them: though the Espoused principle in the natural tendency of it (as I have demonstrated at large) is truly destructive of a good & truly pious life. For it nips the bud of growing vertue, it destroys the life and vigour of Christian Religion; so that this opinion will tempt men to live rather like the vilest Heathen, than the true and purer Christian. Nay, this Assertion becomes more pernicious, and of a far more dangerous consequence, as not  
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residing only in the mere idea of a mans understanding, in the bare notion, or nicer speculation of it, but it breaks forth into Mens practices, they thereby making a plain confession of their real belief of it ; nay, this Doctrine hath been and is impregnated with vigour and power, and almost with life it self, seeming really to be so ; and that by the unanimous and united suffrages of the Abettors of it. And here I shall appeal to the judgment of sober persons, to any that are of unbiaſſed principles, whether this opinion of mine of Conditional Decrees, does not with greater reason, and to better purposes of Piety, explicate the truth, than the contrary assertion does. I shall humbly desire all persons that are sound and Orthodox, duly to weigh and consider, which Position does most glorifie God, and brings the most honour to his Justice, and reputation to his Goodness, and which does most advance the interest of holy living : And lastly, which is most apt to make men become advocates for sloth, carelesness, and impiety. Thus  
Sir,



Sir, you may clearly perceive, that I have used my utmost endeavour to give you as full satisfaction as I can as to this so weighty and grand Question of Divine Predestination; this being truly the Hinge upon which most of our Modern disputes, and our unhappy unchristian differences and animosities have moved, and turned. However, they that would have all their doubts solv'd concerning the proper nature of Gods Decrees, let them readily adhere to the method, and the safe way prescribed by our Saviour in the Gospel, That if men will be eternally happy hereafter, they should be readily perswaded to be truly pious here, though some vainly pretend, or rather dream, that holiness of life, is not so strictly commanded by God. But now if men will admit a belief of this so horrid a Position, then the Gates of Heaven can never be shut against any, and then the narrow Way would become the broad one. But the evil and desperate courses of men which have been occasioned by adhering to this so ill a Principle, whereby

whereby an infinite guilt is contracted, and eternal misery, the necessary consequence of it, a due conviction of this, and of unavoidable ensuing danger, is the clearest confutation imaginable of the perniciousness of this Doctrine. And now I have insisted the longer to discover the weakness of the *Dordrechtan Thesis* of Absolute Decrees, and all to remove the belief of, and assent to so false a Proposition, out of mens hearts, which hath such a blasting influence to hinder the growth and spring of Goodness and all Christian Vertues; since the violent and too eager vindication of this opinion, hath become the readiest bait, and temptation to withdraw men from the practice of true Piety, and of a severe and strict Religion. Let none then be deterred from the studies of a holy life; and then all men by performing the sacred Will of God, by obeying the most Religious injunctions of the blessed *Jesus*, shall assuredly know which of the controverted Doctrines, either of Absolute, or Conditional Election and Reprobation,



tion, is of God, as in ~~the~~ 7<sup>th</sup>. of *John*, and the 17<sup>th</sup>. Vers. For our blessed Saviour in that place, delivers it in an exprefs affirmation, *That if any man will do his will, he shall know of the Doctrine, whether it be of God or of man*; the meer Chimæra, or the phantastick illusion of a giddy and petulant brain. Then and then only we shall find the undoubted certainty, and infallible assurance of all by the blessed effects of righteousness in everlasting blis and happiness. To conclude this Chapter, and therewith at present to put a pericd to this Discourse, I shall only inform you, That the late Primate of *Armagh*, the Learned, and, for Piety, truly venerable Bishop *Usher*, a little before he died, did openly profess his utter abhorrence of the *Geneva* Doctrine, and Discipline; and he did breath forth his last in a firm and full belief, that the Decrees and Constitutions of the Almighty were conditional, in a perfect intuition of a mans Faith, or impenitence, his obedience, or rebellion, his greater piety, or more detestable sins and crimes.

Now

Now this publick declaration of this great truth, and that to divers persons of eminent worth, was very remarkable ; since in that very juncture of time of a mans death, the clear understanding of things, and the most perfect notices of truth are fully awakened ; and so consequently men do see then that which they would not willingly see, or discern, or at least acknowledge before. Lastly, Mr. *Calvin* does confess once for all, That the divine Decrees are not according to the absolute Power and Sovereignty of God, in contradistinction to his Justice ; and then they must be resolv'd into the other part of the *dilemma*, That they are in an equal consideration of both his divine Justice, and tender Mercy. As on the one hand, they have a direct aspect on the Almightyes Justice ; so they do also receive the reflex of his Mercy and Goodness, since there is no justice but carries along with it a mixture of compassion : for the greatest severity of the Letter of the Law of Man, is indeed the very cruelty of a Law. Thus you see I have endeavoured



voured to discover a sound and certain Principle from what is truly dubious and uncertain ; and I have made it my business to present you with Gods revealed Will, being not too forward to pry into his secret one. The former is and must be granted, and I perswade my self the latter must be equally presumed to be the same : and in this manner I have declared what is most reasonable to affirm and averr : whereby you may understand, that I do not make too bold reflexions upon the divine Attributes ; and thus (as some have done) call in question the reputation of Gods Justice and infinite Goodness : yet here it must be granted, That the prefixing Mr. *Calvin's* Name, hath given a great reputation to very many errors ; and 'tis very obvious in Ecclesiastical History, that many persons have entertained a high veneration for some opinions, which have been derived from no other original, than the great reverence they have for, and will pay to the Author ; as in that so memorable an instance of *Papias*, who was the Disciple and Scholar

Scholar of S. *John*, of whom the Church History does inform us, that the great and venerable esteem of his person did reflect shine, and reputation on the first appearance of the Error of the *Milkenaries*, which was, and is, That our Saviour Christ should come at last to live, and gloriously to reign one thousand Years on the Earth. Now the Primitive Christians could not entertain a belief, that so really pious a person would ensnare them into a persuasion of an opinion, which was not like himself, truly Orthodox and sound, and Apostolical; and therefore some eminent Fathers of the Church, as *Justin Martyr*, and *Irenaeus*, did unanimously follow *Papias* in the very footsteps of his positive Assertion among them. Thus when Mens persons are admired, then their common breath passes into divine Air; then all their Notions are presently imbib'd, and as greedily sucked in, though never so unsound and malignant: But 'tis strange that some should esteem the sayings of fallible men, as the Oracles of God



God ; and that their bold affirmatives should be acknowledged for the most convincing Arguments. Now this admiring, and so erecting Altars to mens private Opinions, and so sacrificing their Beliefs on that, hath been of so fatal a consequence, that some mens private fancies have been carefully nurs'd, and so grown up into publick errors: insomuch that they in this manner have given a sad perpetuity to those Pestilential Doctrines, which else would have expired, and have drawn their last breath with their Authours. Yet however here I shall not be too forward to answer that Question, and resolve that doubt which *Episcopus* does propose, whether Mr. *Calvin's* Works have not done, and produc'd far more mischief and hurt, than real good in the Church of God ; and now among us must men become as famous on Record for their desperate Doctrines and Heresies, as that person was for his exceeding great and violent malice, that did set the Temple of *Diana* on fire ? as some like the too hot Sons of *Zebedee*,  
have

have set the now Christian Church in flames? And all this to so inglorious an end, and upon possibly no better a design, than that they might shine, and that, in the very worst of Characters to all Posterity. Yet Mr. *Calvin* does seem to make a full proof of his Doctrine, and as clear a belief of it, because he was absolutely born to be the grand and uncontrouled Patron of it, the great defender of this *Geneva* Faith, though he gives, and layes down no better ground for it; but because he approves and applauds it, (as though men were infallibly decreed to see with his eyes, and not presume to give a judgment of any thing that does disgust his Palate) and so he proceeds in the common way, and road of an *Exemplum* (that being as imperfect a Syllogism in Logick, as his Discourse and Argumentation was concerning this point and subject) and that he really likes the Doctrine, because he hath chosen it; and as absolutely concludes it to be right, because it is the proper object of his Election; so that being perfectly

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fectly enamoured with it, he does by vertue and authority of his Eldership, expect that all men should fall down, and pay a ready and willing assent to his idoliz'd Opinion. Nor indeed can any man escape from being Reprobated, that does or shall in the least wise refuse and reject it. In the 57th. Psalm, and the 10th. Vers. the Lord does expressly tell us, *That his thoughts are not as our thoughts, neither are his wayes as our wayes.* And he does very eminently declare the great disparity of them ; and our weak conceptions concerning them, by the vast distance of the Heavens from the Globe of the Earth. And he fully assures us with the highest protestation imaginable, *That God delights not in the death of a sinner ;* so that mans destruction cannot possibly be the product of the divine Will and appointment, but it is really occasioned by our own choice and too great folly in the Election of it. And if God hath no pleasure in a poor sinners death, in this smaller punishment, the loss of a Temporal life ; then undoubtedly he cannot have in the eternal

nal damnation of men (the greatest of all calamities and miseries). I could now evince to you farther, That this Doctrine of absolute Predestination hath, and is made the infallible touchstone of all others, and it hath been set up, and made the standard by which the most weighty and important truths are to be judged, and measured; so that no Doctrine by such men can be esteemed holy and truly divine, neither the more moderate Professors of them holy and good, if it and they have not the stamp, and real impress of this of Gods irrelative Decrees upon it. And all the *contra-Remonstrants Theses* in Divinity (of this Classis of men) are unhappily built on this so sandy and infirm foundation of absolute Election and Reprobation. Now to quote them all, and to give you a Catalogue of them would be as endless, as difficult a Province, and all would be but the multiplying impertinencies and tediousness. But lastly, Why should Mr. *Calvin* and his followers prohibit men to make a strict inquiry into the nature of the Divine proceedings?



since that opinion must needs condemn it self to be counterfeit, when it refuseth the trial of the Touchstone? For when men deny to plead in Courts of Justice, it is, and must certainly be concluded, that their cause is bad, when they will not come to the Test. And that must necessarily be accounted and reputed an error, that does lurk, and hide it self, which wraps up it self in Mist, and dwells in obscurity; which disdains to appear in the day-light of truth. Nay, such a Doctrine is most dangerous and pernicious, when it so highly concerns the Kingdom and the Church the great safety and joynt interest of both, to have it come under due examination; especially since under this specious and plausible pretence, the peace and tranquillity of the Kingdom, and of our Church hath all along, and now still is too often and too sadly disturbed. And now by all that I have offered (good Sir) to your serious consideration, and your fuller, and clearest information; you may evidently discover, that my real and sincere purpose is to vindicate the  
truth

truth of my present Assertion, whence you may see, that what I have done, hath not been to satisfy the demands of an importuning curiosity, or to gratify the too nice inquisitiveness of some persons; but only to enlighten you and others, in the right knowledge of yours, and their duty: And to enforce all by soundness of Argument, and the greatest weight of Reason. So that I have not attempted to spin a fine and curious thread of discourse, neither to affect any starchy formality in speech, or quaintness of expression. For I have aimed only at perspicuity, and designed due significancy of words, being indeed in this weighty point, more concern'd to convince mens judgments, if not invincibly fortified, and unhappily prepossess'd with prejudices against it; than so powerfully to prevail and win on mens affections, so that you will find my whole series of Discourse to be very plain and practical; which however, like Metals re-assum'd, and taken back into a *Crucible*, it might probably run more refin'd, or it may become like Gold Ore, run purer, as being cast into a better



better Mould for the use of the Temple, and of the Kingdom, and the true Protestant Church, which in continuance of time, by the Divine assistance, shall be effected by,

*Most worthy Sir,*

*Your most obliged and*

*humble Servant,*

**T. H.**

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*Μορῶν Στεφῶν Δόξα.*

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